WHAT IF™

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WHAT IF™ RICK JONES HAD BECOME THE HULK?

MARVEL'S TV SENSATION!

GOOD LORD! THAT BOY'S TURNING INTO SOME KIND OF HUGE GREEN-SKINNED MONSTER--

--AND IT'S ALL MY FAULT!

PERHAPS THE MOST AWESOME OFFBEAT HULK SAGA OF THIS OR ANY OTHER YEAR!

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STAN LEE PRESENTS: A STUNNING SAGA OF AN ALTERNATE REALITY!

You've read of DR. ROBERT BRUCE BANNER's career as the ever-incredible Hulk— and, more recently, you've savored one DAVID BANNER's stint as ol' greenskin in living color on TV. Now, here's the most OFFBEAT Hulk of all—!

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"THE ADULT IS DR. ROBERT BRUCE BANNER...
"...AND THE YOUTH, ORPHAN RICK JONES.
LET'S GO, SON!
HEY! LAY OFF, FOUR-EYES!

COME ON, YOU FOOL! WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE PROTECTIVE TRENCH--
--BEFORE THE BOMB GOES OFF!
BOMB??
"THE SCENE APPEARS TO BE FAMILIAR HISTORY.

"BUT, AT THE CRUCIAL AND FATEFUL MOMENT, SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENS--!
YOU GO IN THE TRENCH FIRST, MISTER!
BUT THERE'S NO TIME--!
THEN WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE SOME!

"YET, A MOMENT BEFORE RICK CAN JUMP INTO THE TRENCH, THE BOMB EXPLODES!

"NOT A SIMPLE NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE, BUT AN EXPERIMENTAL GAMMA BOMB, CREATED BY DR. BANNER--
"--TO LEARN WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE RELEASE OF POWERFUL GAMMA RAYS.

"SOON, HE SHALL HAVE HIS ANSWER, FOR RICK'S SCREAMING FORM IS BATHED IN THE MYSTERIOUS RAYS.
OH, DEAR LORD!
THAT SHOULD'VE BEEN ME!!

AS INDEED IT WAS IN YOUR REALITY... WHEREIN THE GAMMA RAYS TRANSFORMED BRUCE BANNER INTO THE MONSTROUS GREEN ENTITY KNOWN AS THE HULK!*
BUT THIS STORY OCCURS IN ANOTHER REALITY... ON ONE OF COUNTLESS PARALLEL EARTHS.
*SEE THE CLASSIC HULK #1. --ROY.

"UPON THIS PARTICULAR EARTH, IT IS RICK JONES WITH WHOM WE ARE MOSTLY CONCERNED...

YOU TOOK THE FULL IMPACT OF THOSE GAMMA RAYS, SON.

IT'S A MIRACLE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.

GUESS I'VE GOT FRIENDS UPSTAIRS, DOC.

DOWN HERE TOO, RICK.

"THEN, AFTER THE DOCTOR LEAVES THE HOSPITAL ROOM...

NO, IT WAS A DUMB THING, MY BEING OUT THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THAT WAS A BRAV THING YOU DID OUT THERE, RICK.

I COULDN'T LET YOU DIE BECAUSE OF MY STUPID MISTAKE.

ANYWAY, DOC BANNER...IT'S ALREADY GETTIN' DARK OUTSIDE.

I FEEL OKAY-- SO WHEN CAN I SPLIT THIS PLACE?

HOSPITAL

SOON, MAYBE--

--BUT FIRST I'D LIKE TO MAKE A FEW TESTS ON YOU...

WRONG? HECK, NOTHIN', DOC! I'M HEALTHY...AS...A...

...TO LEARN WHY YOU WEREN'T KILLED BY THAT TREMENDOUS DOSAGE OF RADIA-- RICK! WHAT'S WRONG?!

DON'T TELL ME NOTHING WRONG! YOU'RE SICK! I'L CALL THE DOC--

OH, MY GOD

I TELL YOU... EVERYTHING'S... COOL, DOC!

SO... WHAT'RE YOU ...STARING AT-- HUH?!

JUST FEEL...A LITTLE WEIRD, THAT'S...ALL! HEAD POUNDING...LIKE A BONGO DRUM!

AARRRG!

SO QUIT... GAWKIN'... AT ME!

AND GET OFF MY BACK... UNLESS--

--UNLESS YOU WANNA RUMBLE!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PA

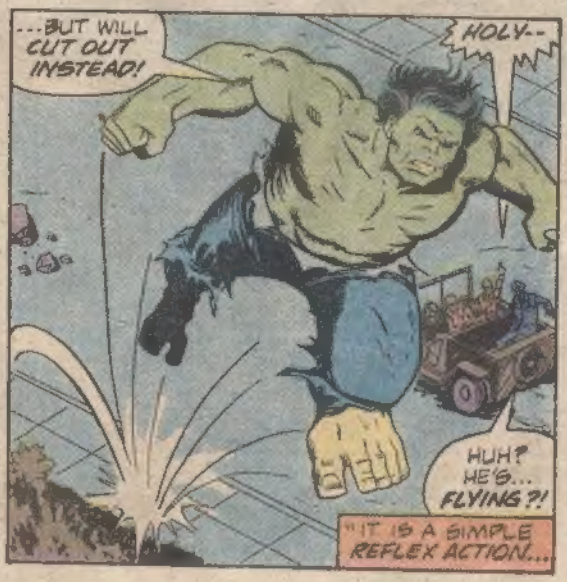
BAH! SQUARE IS TOO CHICKEN TO FIGHT!
GOOD LORD! RICK'S GROWN... TRANSFORMED INTO SOME KIND OF MONSTER!
RICK! I'VE GOT TO HELP YOU!!

I AM NOT RICK! DON'T NEED SQUARES' HELP!
JUST NEED TO BE FREE!
KRUMBLL!

HOLY HANNAH, GENERAL ROSS!!
LOOK WHAT JUST SMASHED THROUGH THE WALL!
I'M NOT BLIND, SOLDIER!
SOLDIERS?!

WHAT IS THAT-- THAT HULK? IT'S A MONSTER... WITH A KID'S FACE--
--LIKE SOMETHING OUTTA "I WAS A TEEN-AGE FRANKENSTEIN"!
I DON'T GIVE A HANGNAIL WHAT THAT HULK IS!
I JUST WANT HIM CAPTURED!

SOLDIERS... UNCOOL! SOLDIERS DON'T FIGHT FAIR! USE SHIVS... HEATERS!
SO I AM CALLED "HULK", HUH?
WELL, HULK WON'T RUMBLE WITH SOLDIERS...


...BUT WILL CUT OUT INSTEAD!
HOLY--
HUH? HE'S... FLYING?!
"IT IS A SIMPLE REFLEX ACTION...

"... THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL LEG MUSCLES, SPURRED TO FANTASTIC LEAPS BY A YOUTHFUL, DARING SPIRIT.

"SOME TIME WOULD PASS BEFORE YOUR EARTH'S HULK DID THE SAME...

"...AND THEN, ONLY AFTER A SUGGESTION BY RICK JONES HIMSELF.* NO, YOUR HULK WOULD HAVE STAYED TO FIGHT.

I DON'T CARE WHERE HE'S GONE BOUNCING OFF TO! FIND THE HULK!!

Y-YES SIR, GENERAL ROSS!

*BACK IN HULK #3.--R.T.

"BUT, HOURS LATER, WHEN EVEN GENERAL 'THUNDERBOLT' ROSS HAS GIVEN UP TRYING TO LOCATE THE HULK...

H-HULK?! I MEAN... RICK!

HUH?!

SOMEBODY ELSE SNEAKING UP ON HULK! MORE SOLDIERS?!

NO! IT'S BANNER AGAIN...

...THE SQUARE WHO KEEPS CALLING HULK "RICK"!

B-BUT YOU ARE RICK!

HE'S ANGRY ENOUGH TO KILL ME!

"YET, IT IS NOT DEATH, BUT RATHER SALVATION WHICH SUDDENLY COMES TO BRUCE BANNER...

"...A WARM AND RADIANT SALVATION!

Y-YOU JUST... LET ME GO, AS SOON AS THE SUN BEGUN TO RISE!

AND NOW... YOU'RE CHANGING AGAIN...!

ARRGGH! HULK'S HEAD--!

FEELS LIKE IT'S BURNIN' UP!

"WHEN THE BURNING SENSATION HAS LEFT..

DOC, I-- CAN YOU HELP ME?

YOU'RE... RICK JONES AGAIN--AND NOT THE HULK!

PLEASE?

"RICK'S PLEA IS ANSWERED, AS LATER THAT DAY, IN A UNIQUE UNDERSEA CHAMBER...

THESE CEMENT WALLS WERE BUILT TO WITHSTAND AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION.

YEAH. BUT WILL THEY STOP ME IF I TURN INTO THAT BIG GREEN FREAK AGAIN?

THAT'S SOMETHING WE'LL SOON FIND OUT, SON...

...WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY TESTING MY THEORY: NAMELY--

--THAT YOU TRANSFORMED INTO THAT HULK FOR ONLY THE DURATION OF THE NIGHT.

SO I'M TO SPEND TONIGHT LOCKED UP INSIDE THIS CEMENT JAIL CELL OF YOURS, RIGHT?

YOU'RE MY RESPONSIBILITY NOW, RICK.

"THEN, AS A FOREBODING DARKNESS OVERSWEEPS THE SKY ABOVE THE SUBSEA CHAMBER...

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, RICK?

JUST LIKE I DID LAST NIGHT, DOC! LOUSY... BURNIN' UP...

LIKE SOMETHIN' INSIDE OF ME FIGHTIN' TO--

--BUST OUT!!

"BANNER PRAYS THAT THIS PRISON CAN WITHSTAND THE HULK'S ATTACK.

"IT DOES.

THOOM!

"FOR, THIS YOUNGER HULK IS NOT YET STRONG ENOUGH TO SMASH HIS WAY FREE.

THUS, IT BECOMES A ROUTINE, WITH RICK JONES SPENDING HIS NIGHTS LOCKED AWAY FROM THE WORLD...

"WHILE BRUCE BANNER...

"...NOT BURDENED BY BECOMING THE HULK HIMSELF, DEVOTES HIS TIME AND ENERGIES TO A DESPERATE PROJECT.

"AS TO THE WORLD AT LARGE, EVEN IN AN OFFICE AT THE PENTAGON...

IF ONLY THAT BLASTED HULK HADN'T DISAPPEARED!

THEN THUNDERBOLT ROSS'D STILL BE OUT HUNTING HIM, INSTEAD OF STUCK HERE!

¡YAWN!¿

"ENTER LOKI, GOD OF EVIL, IMPRISONED IN FABLED ASGARD, THE HOME OF THE NORSE GODS...

THOUGH I CANNOT LEAVE HERE, STILL MIGHT I DEFEAT MY HALF-BROTHER THOR.

I SHALL TEMPT THE ACCURSED THUNDER GOD INTO BATTLE...AFTER SCANNING THE EARTH FOR A FEARFUL MENACE!

"FOLLOWING LONG HOURS OF SEARCHING, LOKI'S DISEMBODIED PRESENCE SETTLES UPON A SUBSEA LABORATORY, WHERE...

IT'S FINALLY FINISHED, RICK. HOPEFULLY, THE GAMMA RAYS FIRED FROM THIS DEVICE*--

--WILL SUPPRESS YOUR TRANSFORMATION INTO THE HULK.

*AS IN HULK #4--R.T.

OF COURSE, THE MACHINE IS STILL UNTESTED, AND THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING JUST WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF--

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT, DOC.

BUT THE RISK, LAD--

HANG THE RISK!

LOOK, DOC--YOU GOT YOUR GUINEA PIG. SO COOL IT, BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND!

THAT'S OKAY BY ME.

WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL NIGHT-FALL TO TEST IT.

IT'LL GIVE ME TIME TO SING--AND NOT THE BLUES FOR A CHANGE.

SO THE MORTAL YOUTH IS REALLY THE INCREDIBLE HULK.

HOW INTERESTING.

AND TONIGHT THE DOCTOR WILL ATTEMPT TO CURE HIM.

BUT SUCH A CURE SHALL NOT COME TO PASS! NOR WILL I AWAIT THE NIGHT TO MAKE USE OF THE HULK!

HEY, WHAT GIVES?! FEEL KINDA--

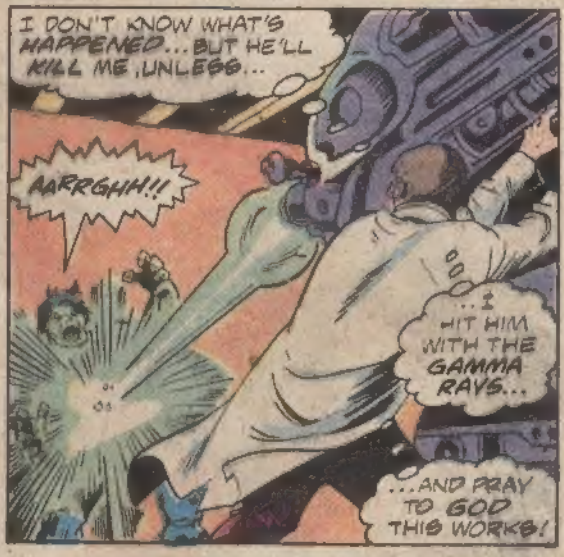
OH, MY GOD--NOT NOW!!

YES, NOW, RICK JONES...

...AS I INSTILL, DEEP WITHIN YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS, THE HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION OF NIGHTFALL...

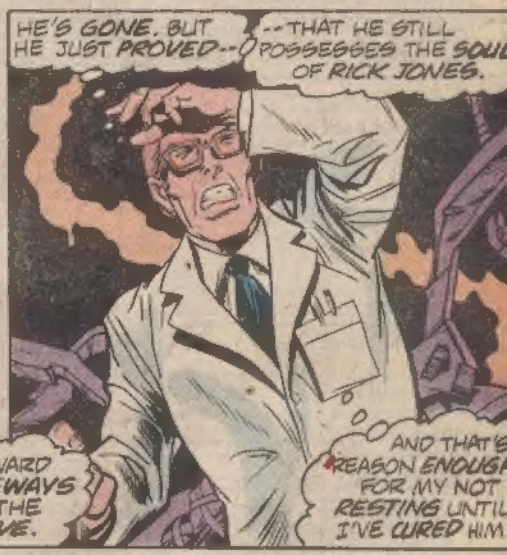
...SO THAT ANY UNDUE EXCITEMENT IS ALL THAT IS REQUIRED--
--TO BRING FORTH THE HULK!

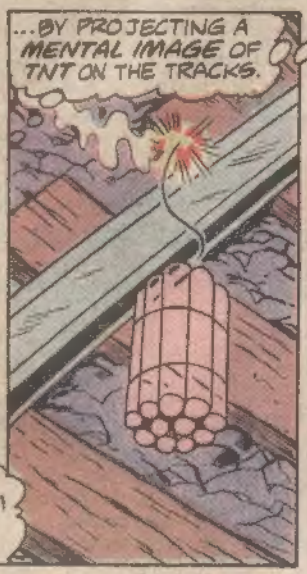
BANNER!! HULK GONNA TOTAL YOU!
G-GOOD LORD! RICK'S CHANGED...WITH HOURS REMAINING BEFORE NIGHTFALL!
AND HE SEEMS MORE SAVAGE THAN BEFORE!


I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED...BUT HE'LL KILL ME, UNLESS...
AARRGHH!!
...I HIT HIM WITH THE GAMMA RAYS...
...AND PRAY TO GOD THIS WORKS!

THE MORTAL'S DEVICE ACCOMPLISHES ITS PURPOSE.
'TIS REVERSING THE METAMORPHOSIS, CHANGING THE HULK BACK TO RICK JONES.

BUT NOW WE SHALL LEARN WHICH IS MORE POWERFUL: EARTHLY SCIENCE...
NO WAY!!





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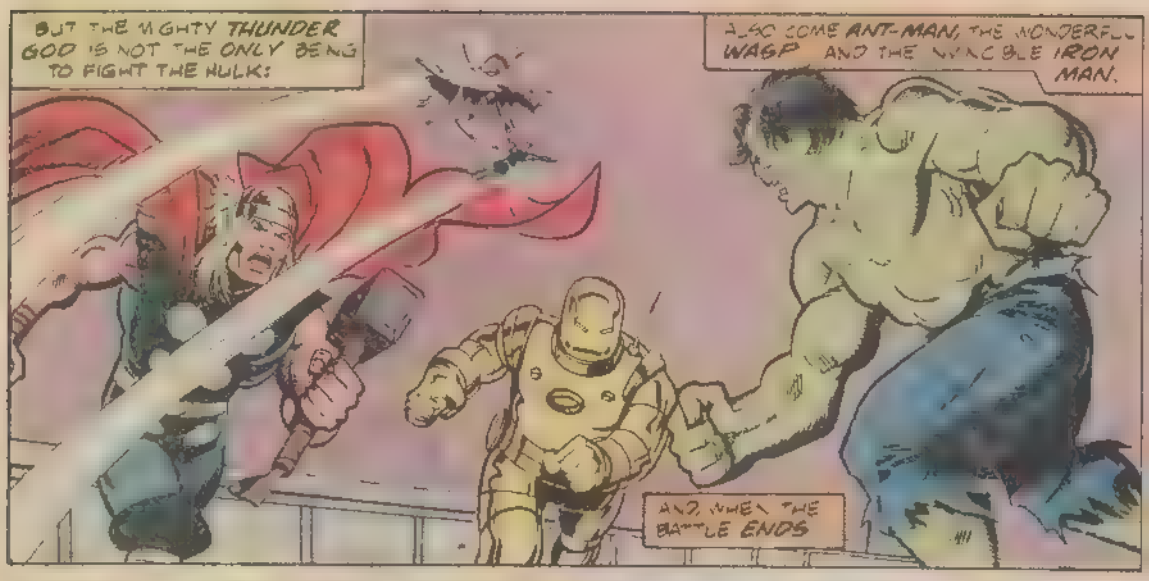
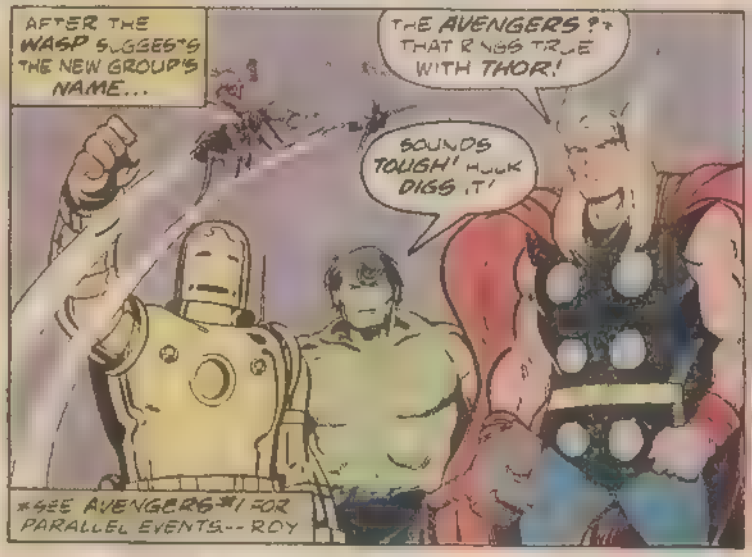
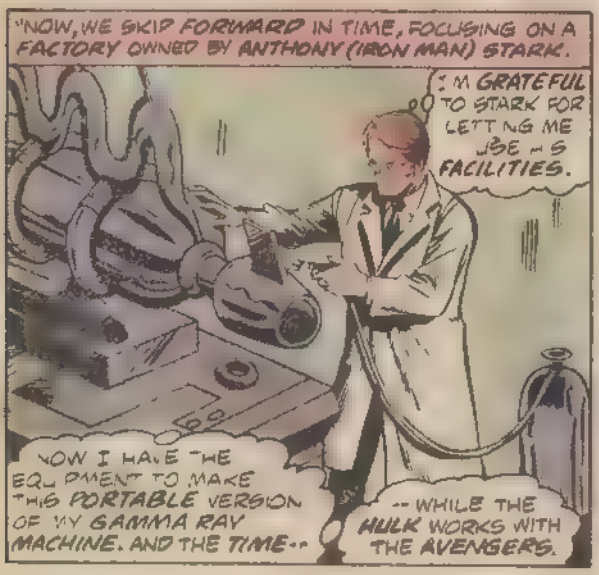
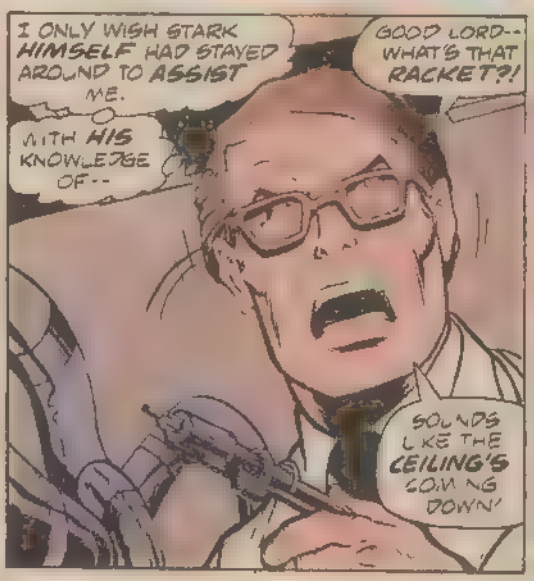

BUT THE MIGHTY THUNDER GOD IS NOT THE ONLY BEING TO FIGHT THE HULK:
ALSO COME ANT-MAN, THE WONDERFUL WASP AND THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN.
AND WHEN THE BATTLE ENDS

" AND LOKI, THE REAL MENACE, IS EXPOSED AND DEFEATED...
SO ANT-MAN WANTS TO MAKE US A COMBO, HUH?
THEN HULK WILL JOIN THE GANG. HULK NEEDS A PLACE TO HANG OUT.


AFTER THE WASP SUGGESTS THE NEW GROUP'S NAME...
THE AVENGERS?* THAT RINGS TRUE WITH THOR!
SOUNDS TOUGH! HULK DIGGS IT!
*SEE AVENGERS #1 FOR PARALLEL EVENTS--ROY


"NOW, WE SKIP FORWARD IN TIME, FOCUSING ON A FACTORY OWNED BY ANTHONY (IRON MAN) STARK.
I'M GRATEFUL TO STARK FOR LETTING ME USE HIS FACILITIES.
NOW I HAVE THE EQUIPMENT TO MAKE THIS PORTABLE VERSION OF MY GAMMA RAY MACHINE. AND THE TIME--
--WHILE THE HULK WORKS WITH THE AVENGERS.


I ONLY WISH STARK HIMSELF HAD STAYED AROUND TO ASSIST ME.
WITH HIS KNOWLEDGE OF--
GOOD LORD--WHAT'S THAT RACKET?!
SOUNDS LIKE THE CEILING'S COMING DOWN!

WHILE, AT THAT MOMENT, ATOP THE ROOF OF STARK'S FACTORY...

THIS SHALL BE THE CLIMAX OF OUR BATTLE... AS AVENGER SLAYS AVENGER!!

BAH!! HE AIN'T NO AVENGER. GIANT-MAN! HULK SEEN HIM CHANGE!

I "DIG" YOU, GREENSKIN! HE'S REALLY THE SPACE PHANTOM! BUT HE'S ACQUIRED ALL OF IRON MAN'S POWERS!

AND IF WE CAN'T DEFEAT HIM, THE EARTH IS LOST!!*

*FROM AVENGERS #2. --R.T.

AFTER THE SPACE PHANTOM IS DEFEATED, AND THE REAL IRON MAN RETURNED FROM LIMBO...

HULK JOINED THIS GANG TO PUNCH OUT BAD GUYS.. NOT TO HAVE AVENGERS JAM WITH HULK!

WELL, HULK CAN TAKE ANYBODY!

SO WHY SHOULD HULK HANG OUT WITH YOU LOWLIFES?

FROM NOW ON, HULK DOES SOLO GIG AND--

YAARRGH!

ZAK!

FORGIVE ME IF THIS HURTS, HULK. BUT IF YOU LEAVE NOW--

--I MAY NEVER GET TO TEST OUT THIS GAMMA DEVICE!

BANNER AGAIN!!

ZAPPED HULK WITH WEIRDO MACHINE!

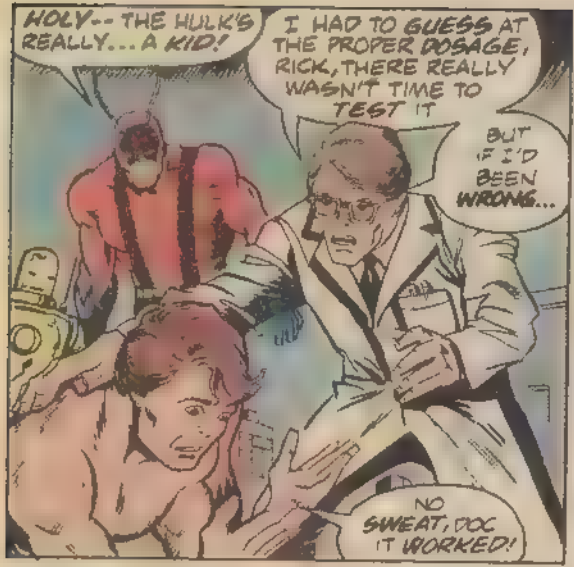
MACHINE MAKES HULK FEEL CRUMMY-- LIKE WHEN RICK COMES BACK.

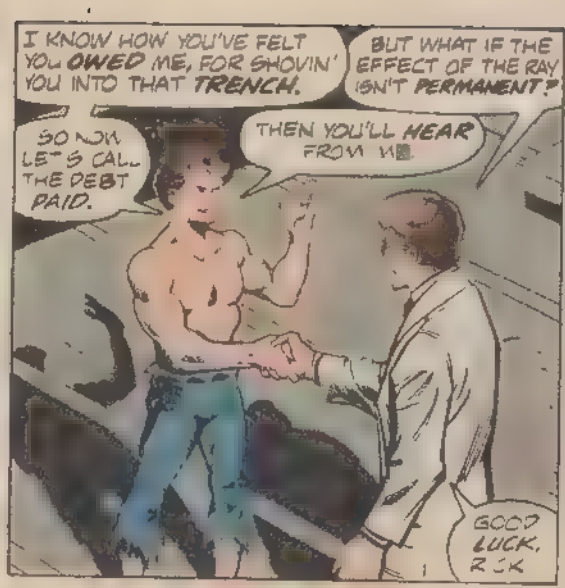
BUT THIS TIME, RICK WON'T COME BACK!

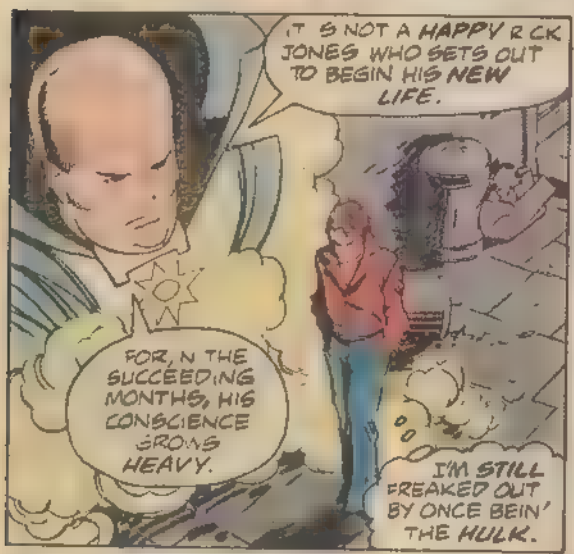
YOU HEAR ME, DOC! THIS TIME RICK ISN'T GONNA--

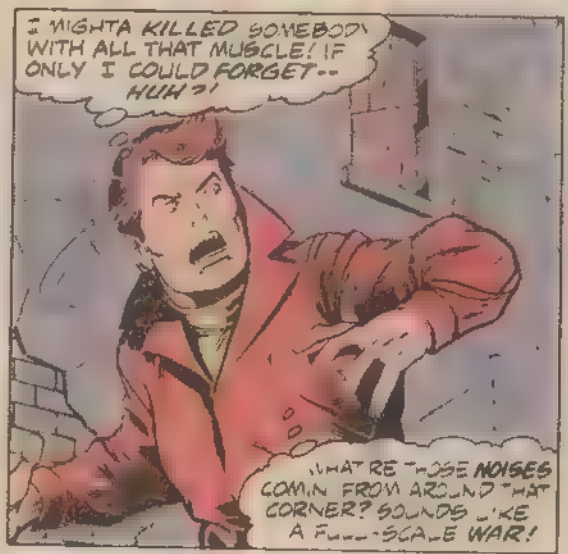
UH, YEAH.

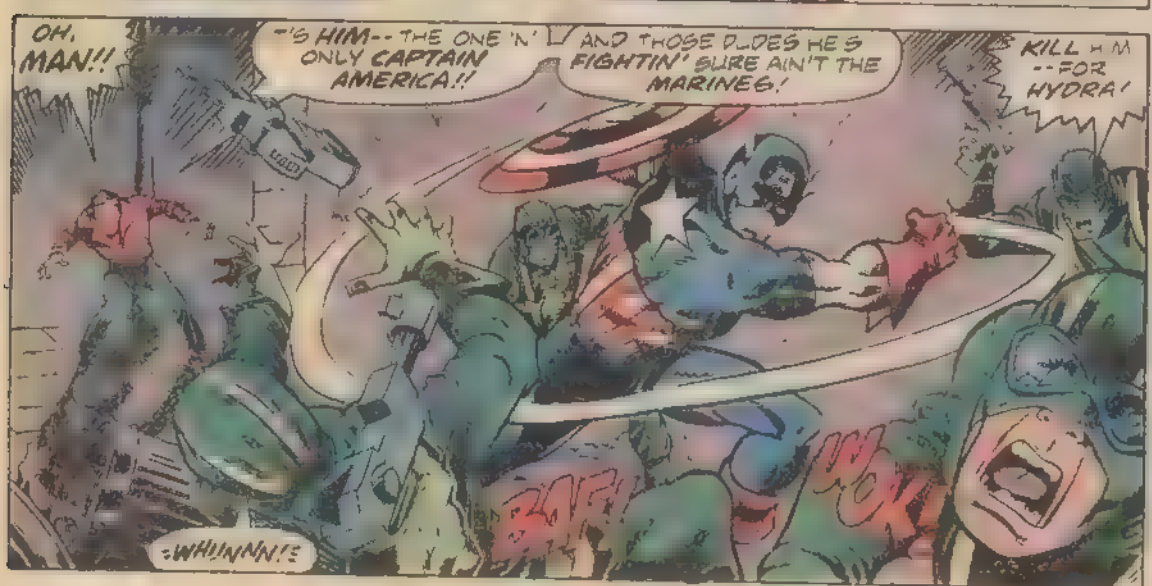
DOC? IS IT OVER, MAN?

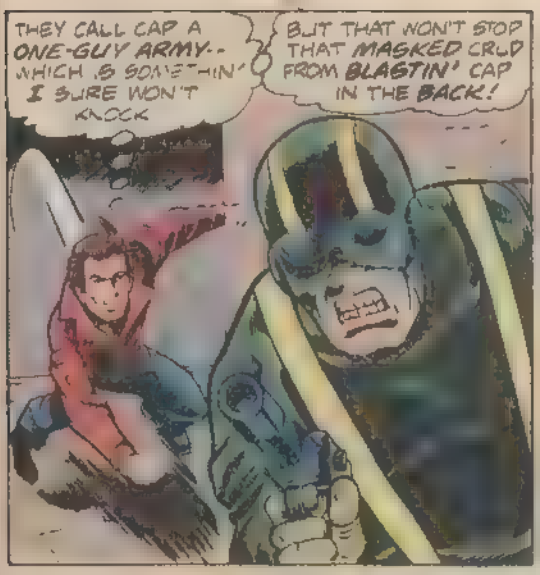

HOLY-- THE HULK'S REALLY... A KID!
I HAD TO GUESS AT THE PROPER DOSAGE, RICK, THERE REALLY WASN'T TIME TO TEST IT
BUT IF I'D BEEN WRONG...
NO SWEAT, DOC IT WORKED!

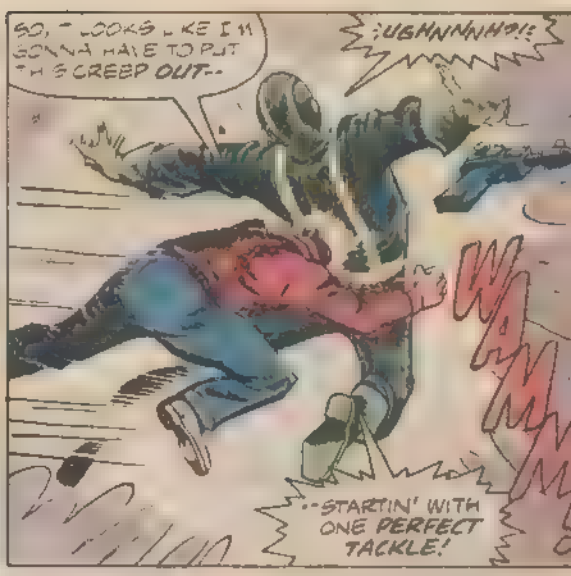

I KNOW HOW YOU'VE FELT YOU OWED ME, FOR SHOVIN' YOU INTO THAT TRENCH.
BUT WHAT IF THE EFFECT OF THE RAY ISN'T PERMANENT?
SO NOW LET'S CALL THE DEBT PAID.
THEN YOU'LL HEAR FROM ME.
GOOD LUCK, RICK

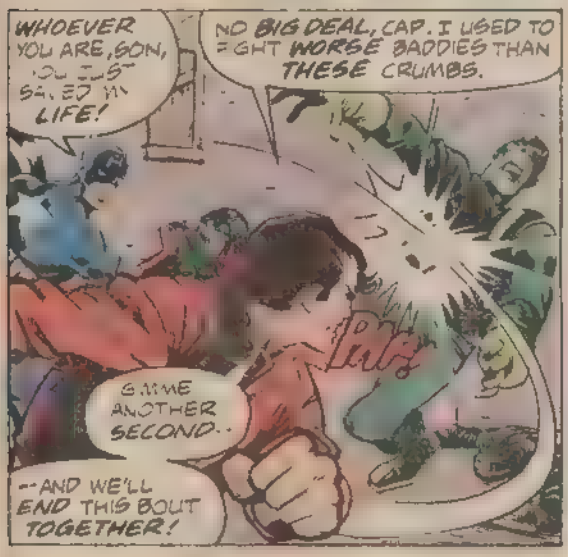

IT'S NOT A HAPPY RICK JONES WHO SETS OUT TO BEGIN HIS NEW LIFE.
FOR, IN THE SUCCEEDING MONTHS, HIS CONSCIENCE GROWS HEAVY.
I'M STILL FREAKED OUT BY ONCE BEIN' THE HULK.

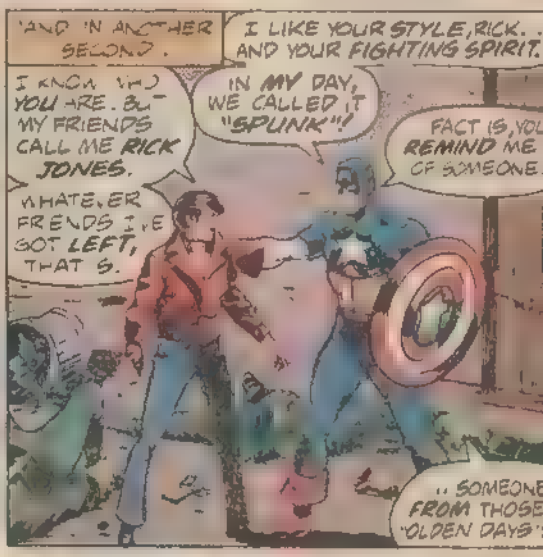

I MIGHTA KILLED SOMEBODY WITH ALL THAT MUSCLE! IF ONLY I COULD FORGET-- HUH?!
WHAT'RE THOSE NOISES COMIN' FROM AROUND THAT CORNER? SOUNDS LIKE A FULL-SCALE WAR!

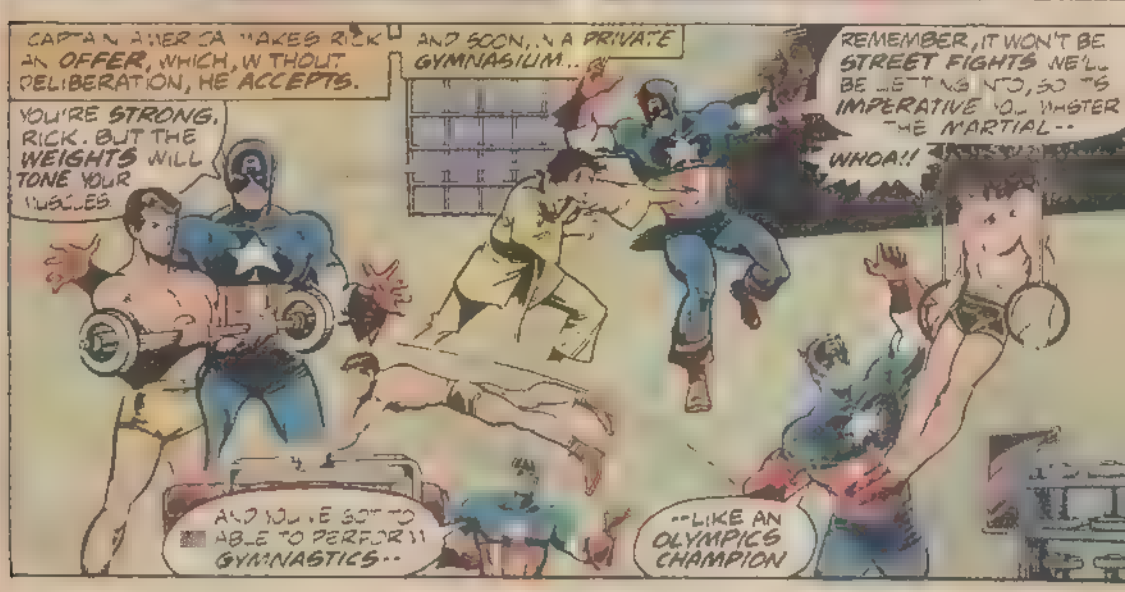

OH, MAN!!
IT'S HIM-- THE ONE 'N' ONLY CAPTAIN AMERICA!!
AND THOSE DUDES HE'S FIGHTIN' SURE AIN'T THE MARINES!
KILL HIM -- FOR HYDRA!
WHIINNN!!


THEY CALL CAP A ONE-GUY ARMY-- WHICH IS SOMETHIN' I SURE WON'T KNOCK
BUT THAT WON'T STOP THAT MASKED CRUD FROM BLASTIN' CAP IN THE BACK!


SO, IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GONNA HAVE TO PUT THIS CREEP OUT--
!UGHNNNNN!!
--STARTIN' WITH ONE PERFECT TACKLE!


WHOEVER YOU ARE, SON, YOU JUST SAVED MY LIFE!
NO BIG DEAL, CAP. I USED TO FIGHT WORSE BADDIES THAN THESE CRUMBS.
GIMME ANOTHER SECOND..
--AND WE'LL END THIS BOUT TOGETHER!


AND IN ANOTHER SECOND.
I LIKE YOUR STYLE, RICK.. AND YOUR FIGHTING SPIRIT.
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. BUT MY FRIENDS CALL ME RICK JONES.
IN MY DAY, WE CALLED IT "SPUNK"!!
WHATEVER FRIENDS I'VE GOT LEFT, THAT'S.
FACT IS, YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE.
.. SOMEONE FROM THOSE 'OLDEN DAYS'


CAPTAIN AMERICA MAKES RICK AN OFFER, WHICH, WITHOUT DELIBERATION, HE ACCEPTS.
AND SOON, IN A PRIVATE GYMNASIUM..
YOU'RE STRONG, RICK. BUT THE WEIGHTS WILL TONE YOUR MUSCLES.
REMEMBER, IT WON'T BE STREET FIGHTS WE'LL BE GETTING INTO, SO IT'S IMPERATIVE YOU MASTER THE MARTIAL--
WHOA!!
AND YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO PERFORM GYMNASTICS--
--LIKE AN OLYMPICS CHAMPION

"THEN, FOLLOWING LONG AND GRUELING MONTHS OF TRAINING BY THE WORLD'S FOREMOST FIGHTING MAN...

MAN, OH, MAN, CAP! IT'S A PERFECT FIT!

IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE, RICK YOU'VE PROVEN THAT YOU'RE THE EQUAL OF MY FORMER PARTNER...

...A BRAVE YOUNG LAD NAMED BUCKY.

"A NEW FIGHTING TEAM IS BORN THIS DAY...

"... A TEAM THAT IS SOON IN DEADLY COMBAT ONCE AGAIN, WITH FAMILIAR FOES...

THE MURDEROUS HORDES OF HYDRA!"

KONGA CAPTAIN AMERICA #110-- RT

"BUT, AS CAPTAIN AMERICA HAD WARNED RICK JONES...

"...THESE BATTLES WOULD NOT BE SIMPLE STREET FIGHTS...

KA-WOK!

"... BUT RATHER, SMALL-SCALE ALL-OUT WARS!

IN A WAR AGAINST HYDRA ONE MUST FIGHT WITH EVERY IOTA OF ENERGY TO SURVIVE.

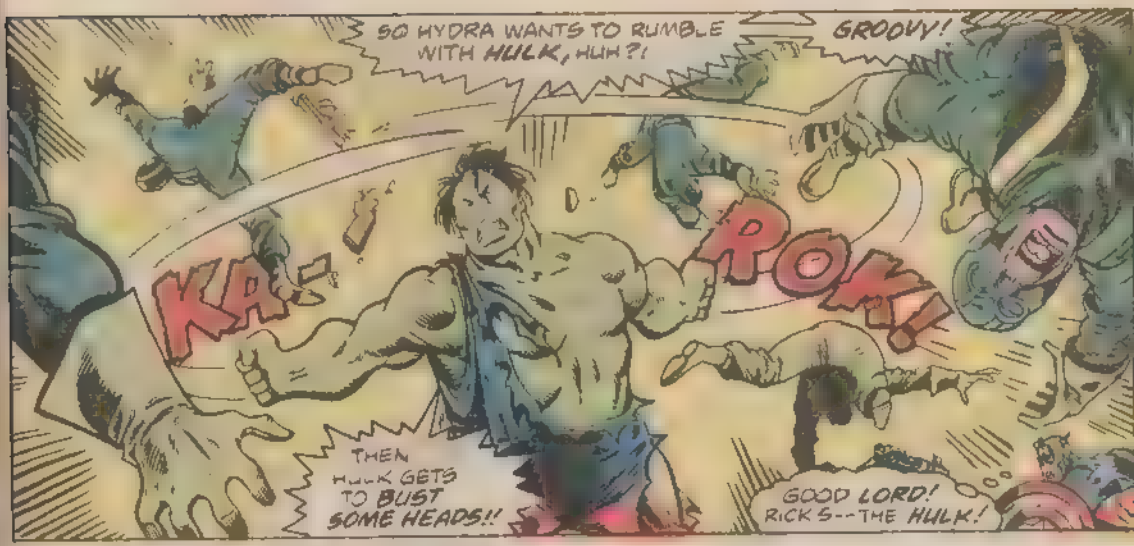
IN THE LAB OF RICK JONES...

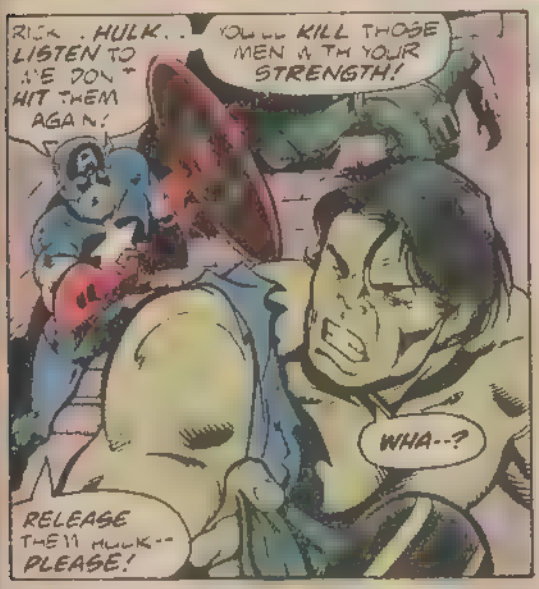
"HIS PULSE QUICKENS TO MACHINE GUN RAPIDITY HIS BLOOD BOILS, NEARLY ERUPTING FROM POUNDING VEINS

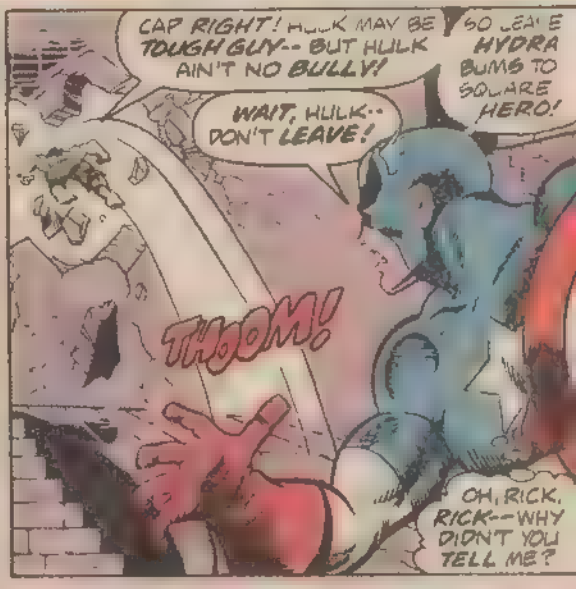
HIS ANGER SEETHES, FAR EXCEEDING THE YOUTH'S POWER OF CONTROL.

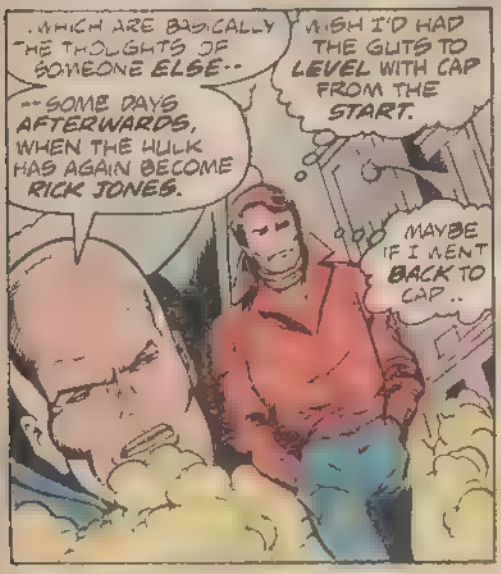
AND, WITH ONLY SECONDS HAVING PASSED, THE EFFECTS OF BRUCE BANNER'S GAMMA RAY DEVICE--

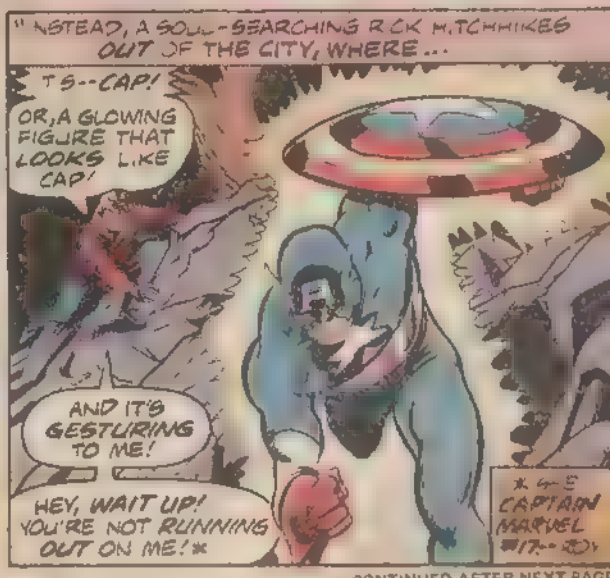
--HAVE QUITE PLAINLY WORN OFF!











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"IN TIME, THE SPECTRAL ILLUSION VANISHES, BUT NOT BEFORE...

HE WAS POINTING AT THESE FAR-OUT-- BRACE-LETS!

THEY'RE THROBBING --LIKE THEY'RE ALIVE?

CAN'T RESIST TRYIN' 'EM ON--

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF WHAT YOU SEE AND HEAR, SON. THE NEGA-BANDS WILL SHRINK TO FIT YOUR WRISTS

DO AS I SAY...

AND SLAM YOUR WRISTS TOGETHER, WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT!

KTANG

FAN-TASTIC!

YOU HAVE FREED ME, RICK JONES--FREED CAPTAIN MARVEL FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE!

BUT FEAR NOT. YOU WON'T STAY THERE FOREVER!

NO? MAYBE I SHOULD..

--ESPECIALLY IF I BLOW IT AND CHANGE TO THE HULK AGAIN.

"RICK EXPLAINS EVERYTHING TO THE SYMPATHETIC KREE WARRIOR, AND THE ARRANGEMENT PROVES TO BE A SUCCESSFUL ONE:

"WHENEVER GREAT POWER IS NEEDED, IT IS MAR-VELL, AND NOT THE HULK, THAT PERFORMS THE DEED.

...WHILE RICK, TRAPPED IN THIS TIMELESS ANTI-COSMOS, REMAINS ... SAFE?

AND ALONE?

WHAT IN BLAZES-- IS THAT?!

WHO ELSE COULD IT BE, STRIPLING...BUT THE SUPREME RULER OF THIS NIGHTDARK REALM?

WHO, INDEED, BUT ANNIHILUS?!

HERE, THE WILL OF ANNIHILUS IS SUPREME. AND MY WILL IS THAT ALL BEINGS FROM YOUR HATED SPHERE--

--MUST DIE!*

*PARALLEL SCENE FROM AVENGERS #97. --R.T.

GUESS I ... HAVE TO DO WHAT THAT MAR-VELL DUDE TOLD ME ..

GET HIM TO SLAM THOSE NEGA-BANDS ON HIS WRISTS TOGETHER--

-- SO SILVERTOP AN I CAN SWITCH ATOMS, AND HE CAN FIGHT THIS ANNIHIL--

NO, WAIT! I'M CHANGIN' AGAIN INTO--

FAN-TASTIC! I DIDN'T BECOME THE GREEN GIANT THE HULK COULD NEVER DO--

--THIS!! I'M BLASTIN' THE FREAK...WITH MY MIND? BUT HOW...WHY?

YOU MAY THANK THE INTELLIGENCE SUPREME, RICK JONES...

...THE COLLECTED WILL OF THE MOST FANTASTIC MINDS OF THE KREE RACE

I STIMULATED THE INHERENT POWER IN YOUR MIND..TO REPEL ANNIHILUS ...AND TO SUPPRESS THE HULK.

YES, KEEP FIGHTING THE METAMORPHOSIS. REFUSE TO LET IT OCCUR...

FOR ONLY RICK JONES CAN NOW SAVE THE HUMAN RACE.

FAN-TASTIC! I DID FIGHT OFF THE HULK AND NOW--

NOW I BRING YOU OUT OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE TO MY HALL OF JUDGMENT ON HALA...

...HEADQUARTERS PLANET OF THE STAR-SPANNING KREE.

THE KREE ARE ENGAGED IN AN INTERGALACTIC WAR WITH THEIR MORTAL FOES THE SKRULLS.*

* RECORDED IN AVENGERS #89-97.--R

"UNDER THE INTELLIGENCE SUPREME'S GUIDANCE, RICK'S MIND IS A CRUCIAL WEAPON IN THE KREE/SKRULL WAR.

"CAPTAIN MARVEL AND THE EARTH'S AVENGERS ARE ALSO PARTICIPANTS IN THAT WAR.

WHEN THE FINAL BATTLE HAS BEEN FOUGHT...

AND EARTH'S HEROES BROUGHT TO HALA BY THE INTELLIGENCE SUPREME...

"...IT IS LEARNED WHAT PRICE RICK JONES HAS PAID FOR HIS VALOR.

IT'S LIKE SOME SORT OF OVER-LOAD.

I FEAR ONLY YOU CAN SAVE THE BOY NOW MAR-VELL--

--BY BECOMING ONE WITH HIM ONCE MORE--THUS GIVING HIM YOUR FULL LIFE-FORCE.

"RICK JONES LIVES, THANKS TO THE REVITALIZING ENERGIES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL, BUT...

THE TWO OF US ARE ONE AGAIN, RICK.

THAT SO, WHITEY? WELL I DON'T DIG IT, SEE?

I FINALLY K CK THAT HULK HABIT-- AND NOW I'M JEKYLL 'N' HYDE AGAIN!

"HIS ALTER EGO TRAPPED IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE...

"...THE YOUTH SEEKS EMPLOYMENT AS A SINGER, IN A GREENWICH VILLAGE CAFE -- WHERE SOMEONE ELSE HAS JUST AUDITIONED.*

WELL, MR BOGGS?

DID YOU L KE THE SONG?

HE LOVED IT, SISTER

*FROM CAPTAIN MARVEL #22:- RDY.

"LATER, AFTER RICK JONES AND LOU ANN HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED...

YOU ALWAYS SO MACHISMO, MR JONES?

SURE--WHAT-E.ER THAT MEANS.

"HER UNCLE IS PROFESSOR BENJAMIN SAVANNAH...

"...WHOSE LABORATORY IS SOON TO BE INVADED BY THE NUCLEAR MONSTER CALLED MEGATON!*

OH, MY LORD!

THERE'S ENERGY HERE-- AN' I WANT IT-- NOW!

RICK--HE'S GROWING EVERY MOMENT--AND WHEN HE REACHES CRITICAL MASS...

THIS T ME WE AGREE, MARLY!

*FROM CAPTAIN MARVEL #23.--RT.

"MOMENTS PASS, DURING WHICH RICK HAS SECURED A SECOND PA R OF NEGA-BANDS.

RICK, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE-- SLAP YOUR WRISTS TO-GETHER... NOW!!

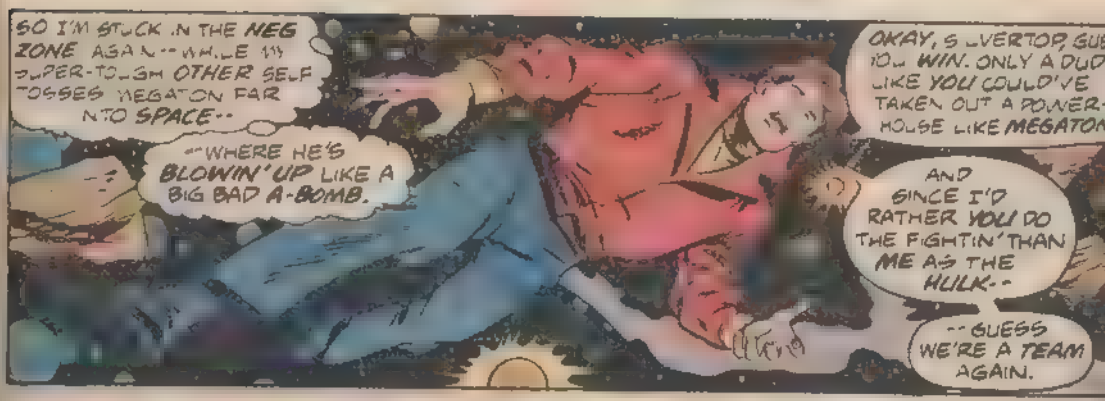
GUESS I COULD WILL MYSELF TO BECOME THE HULK.

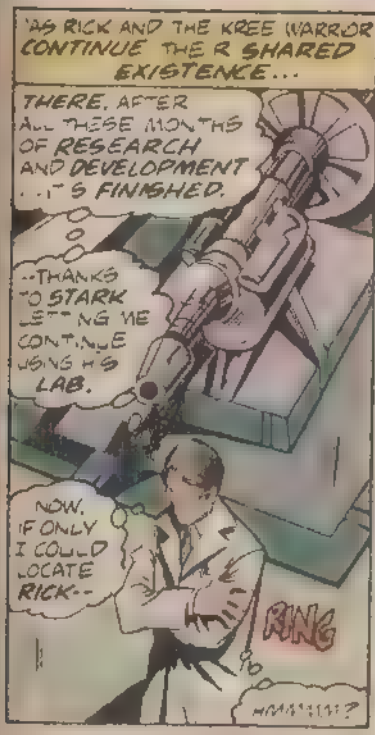
BUT WITHOUT THAT INTELLIGENCE SUPREME, MAY BE I'D BOMB OUT.

NIX! CAN T RISK IT.

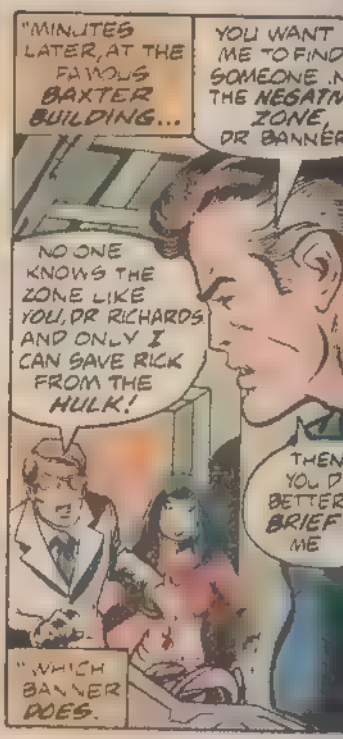
ANYWAY, WHO NEEDS OL' GREENIE--WITH CAP MARVEL DOIN' HIS THING?!

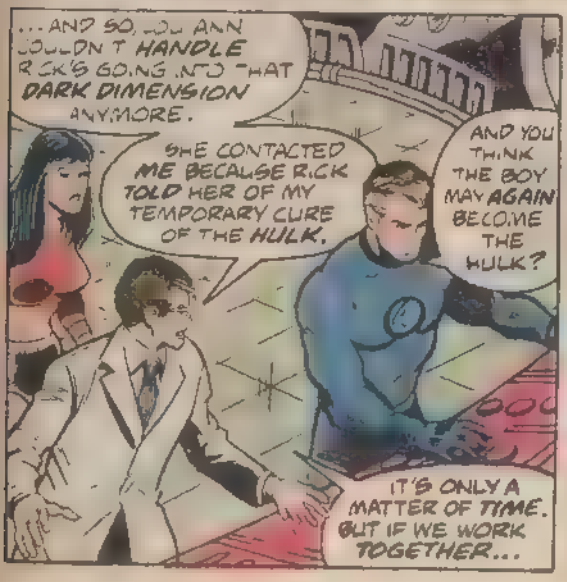
KTHANG!

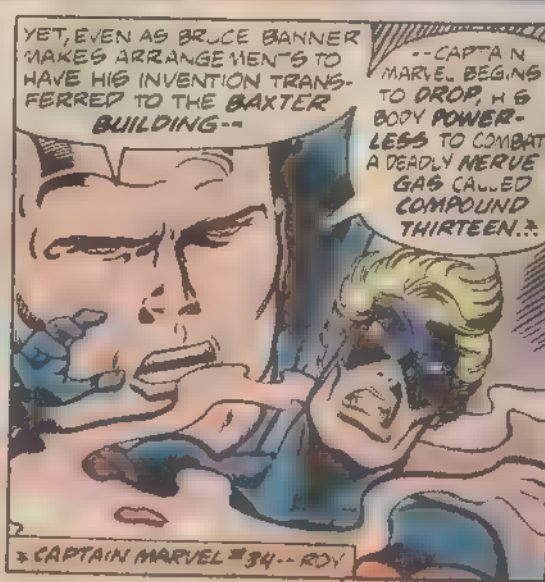

SO I'M STUCK IN THE NEG ZONE AGAIN--WHILE MY SUPER-TOUGH OTHER SELF TOSSES MEGATON FAR INTO SPACE--
--WHERE HE'S BLOWIN' UP LIKE A BIG BAD A-BOMB.
OKAY, SUPERTOP, GUESS YOU WIN. ONLY A DUD LIKE YOU COULD'VE TAKEN OUT A POWER-HOUSE LIKE MEGATON
AND SINCE I'D RATHER YOU DO THE FIGHTIN' THAN ME AS THE HULK--
--GUESS WE'RE A TEAM AGAIN.


AS RICK AND THE KREE WARRIOR CONTINUE THEIR SHARED EXISTENCE...
THERE. AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ...IT'S FINISHED.
--THANKS TO STARK LETTING ME CONTINUE USING HIS LAB.
NOW. IF ONLY I COULD LOCATE RICK--
RING
HMM?!!!

YES, THIS IS DR. BANNER. WHAT? SLOW DOWN, MISS. YOU SAY THAT RICK AND THIS CAPTAIN MARVEL--?
WHAT'S YOUR ADDRESS, LOU ANN?
I'LL BE RIGHT OVER!


MINUTES LATER, AT THE FAMOUS BAXTER BUILDING...
YOU WANT ME TO FIND SOMEONE IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE, DR BANNER
NO ONE KNOWS THE ZONE LIKE YOU, DR RICHARDS AND ONLY I CAN SAVE RICK FROM THE HULK!
THEN YOU'D BETTER BRIEF ME
WHICH BANNER DOES.


...AND SO, LOU ANN COULDN'T HANDLE RICK'S GOING INTO THAT DARK DIMENSION ANYMORE.
SHE CONTACTED ME BECAUSE RICK TOLD HER OF MY TEMPORARY CURE OF THE HULK.
AND YOU THINK THE BOY MAY AGAIN BECOME THE HULK?
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME. BUT IF WE WORK TOGETHER...

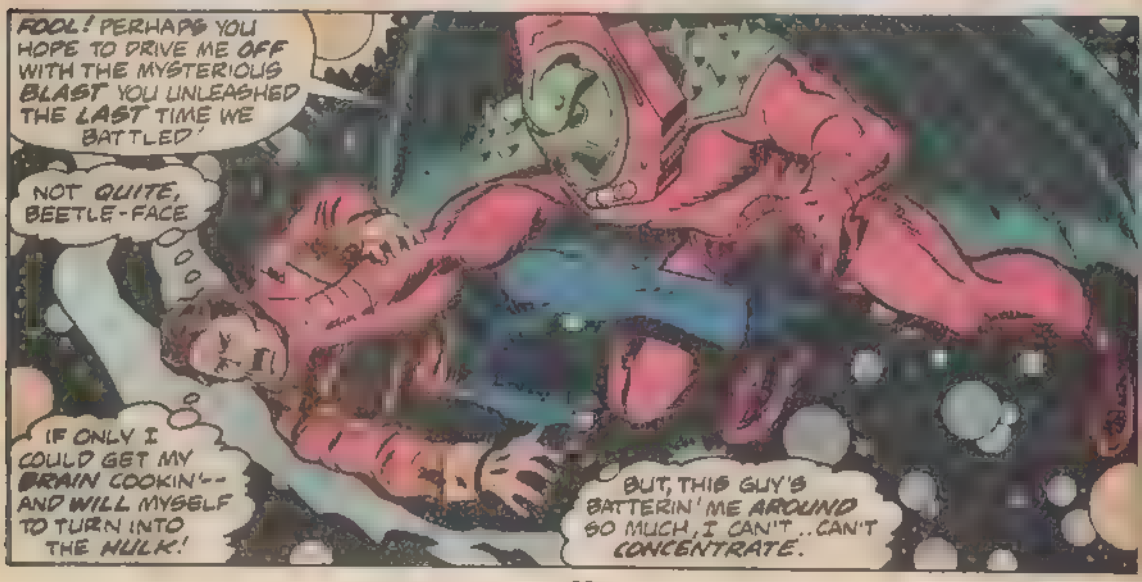

YET, EVEN AS BRUCE BANNER MAKES ARRANGEMENTS TO HAVE HIS INVENTION TRANSFERRED TO THE BAXTER BUILDING--
--CAPTAIN MARVEL BEGINS TO DROP, HIS BODY POWERLESS TO COMBAT A DEADLY NERVE GAS CALLED COMPOUND THIRTEEN.*
* CAPTAIN MARVEL #34--ROY

WHILE RICK IS PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE TRUTH.
FLAIR DIES--
--I'LL BE TRAPPED HERE--FOREVER!
YOU NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT..."FOREVER," STRIPLING!
THAT RAUNCHY VOICE--IT'S ANNIHILUS!*
*CHECK BACK TO CM #35-- ROY

HEY, MARVY! C'MON, YOU GOTTA PULL YOURSELF OUT OF IT! YOU GOTTA GET THOSE WRISTS SLAMMING AND...

WHOEVER YOU ARE CALLING, HELP, OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT HEAR YOU.
OR, PERHAPS HE WISHES YOU TO DIE ALONE!

DO YOU HOPE TO CONTINUALLY ELUDE THE MASTER OF THIS NIGHTDARK DIMENSION?
OH MOMMA--!


FOOL! PERHAPS YOU HOPE TO DRIVE ME OFF WITH THE MYSTERIOUS BLAST YOU UNLEASHED THE LAST TIME WE BATTLED!
NOT QUITE, BEETLE-FACE
IF ONLY I COULD GET MY BRAIN COOKIN'--AND WILL MYSELF TO TURN INTO THE HULK!
BUT, THIS GUY'S BATTERIN' ME AROUND SO MUCH, I CAN'T..CAN'T CONCENTRATE.

WHILE ON EARTH, IN MR. FANTASTIC'S LABORATORY

...AND SO I'VE HAD THIS GNAWING APPREHENSION THAT THE GAMMA RAY BOMBARDMENT ONLY PROVIDED A TEMPORARY CURE FOR RICK

MY SUSPICIONS WERE CONFIRMED WHEN I LEARNED WHAT HAPPENED WHEN RICK AND CAPTAIN AMERICA FOUGHT THOSE HYDRA AGENTS.

AND YOU THINK THIS GAMMATRON OF YOURS WILL PERMANENTLY CURE THE BOY?

YES, BUT NOT THE WAY YOU'D EXPECT.

RICHARDS PONDERS THE REPLY...

...UNAWARE OF BANNER'S REAL INTENTION: TO ACHIEVE A MOST UNCONVENTIONAL CURE FOR RICK...

...LIKE THAT EXPERIENCED BY YOUR EARTH'S BANNER, WHEN "CURED" BY ANOTHER GAMMATRON.*

* HULK #130.--R.T.

HOW MUCH LONGER WILL IT BE, RICHARDS?

WE'VE SEEN VAST GALAXIES ON THAT VIEWSCREEN OF YOURS, BUT NO SIGN OF RICK.

THE NEGATIVE ZONE IS A UNIVERSE UNTO ITSELF, BANNER.

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST WITH YOU, WE MAY NEVER FIND YOUR FRIEND.

WAIT, RICHARDS--SOMETHING'S THERE!

I'LL TRY TO GET A MORE PRECISE FIX ON THAT SECTOR OF THE ZONE AND--

--GOOD LORD!!

ONE OF THOSE FIGURES COULD BE RICK. BUT THE OTHER, RICHARDS...THE OTHER?!

EVEN WITHOUT A FINE FOCUS I RECOGNIZE THAT SHAPE...THOSE AWESOME, INSECT-LIKE WINGS!

IT'S ANNIHILUS... AND HE'S WELL-NAMED! HE'LL DESTROY ALL LIFE HE ENCOUNTERS.

AND I STILL DON'T HAVE A TIGHT ENOUGH FIX ON RICK--TO HELP HIM.

YOU MUST! YOU MUST!

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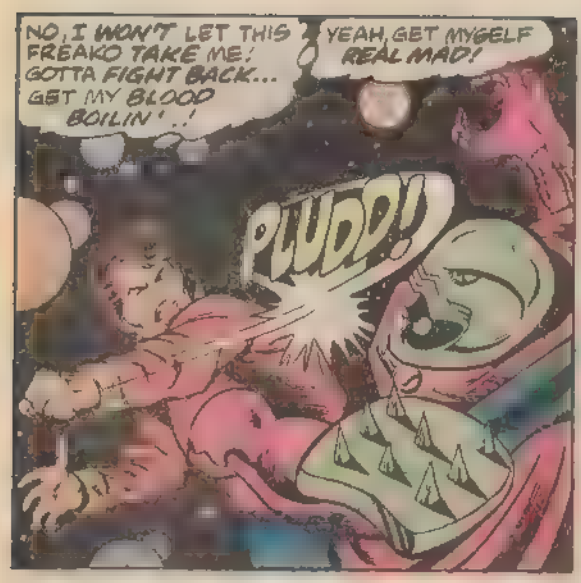
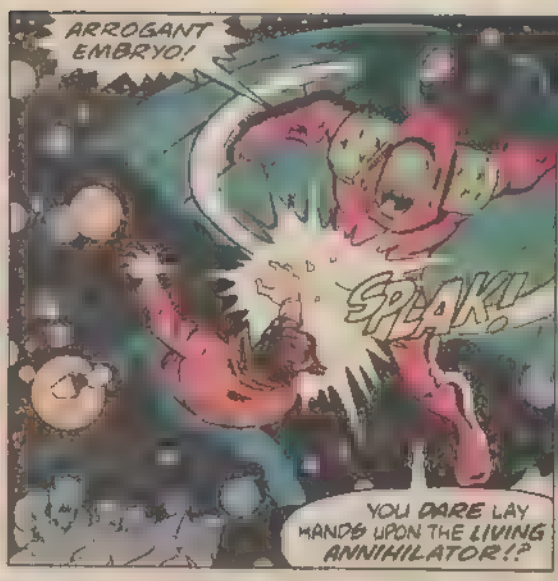
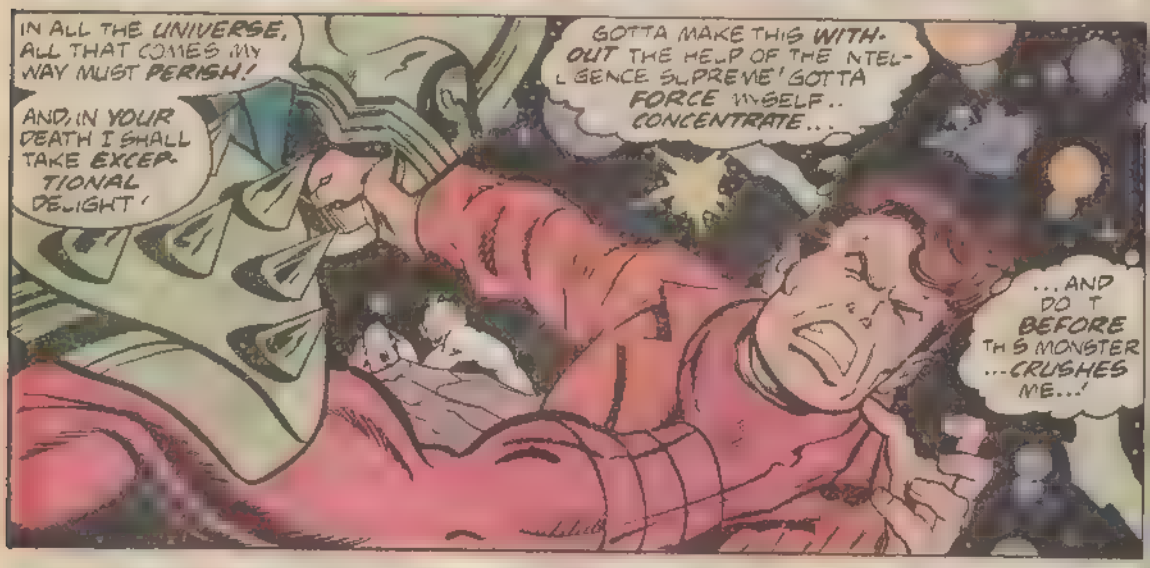
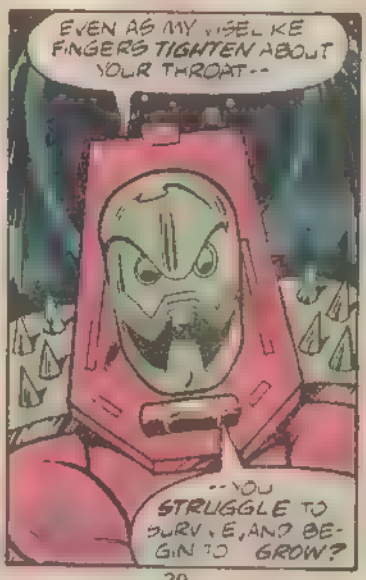

NO, I WON'T LET THIS FREAKO TAKE ME! GOTTA FIGHT BACK... GET MY BLOOD BOILIN'..!
YEAH, GET MYSELF REAL MAD!
PLUDD!


ARROGANT EMBRYO!
SPEAK!
YOU DARE LAY HANDS UPON THE LIVING ANNIHILATOR!?


IN ALL THE UNIVERSE, ALL THAT COMES MY WAY MUST PERISH!
AND, IN YOUR DEATH I SHALL TAKE EXCEPTIONAL DELIGHT!
GOTTA MAKE THIS WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE INTELLIGENCE SUPREME! GOTTA FORCE MYSELF.. CONCENTRATE...
...AND DO IT BEFORE THIS MONSTER ...CRUSHES ME...!

SO, YOU CONTINUE TO SQUIRM ... TO STRAIN TO BREAK FREE OF MY GRASP!


EVEN AS MY VISELIKE FINGERS TIGHTEN ABOUT YOUR THROAT--
--YOU STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE, AND BEGIN TO GROW?

-AND, LIKE A CHAMELEON, TO BECOME EMERALD IN HUE?!

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BULLPEN BULLETINS

STAN'S SOAPBOX

Hey, remember me telling you I was going to Tokyo in May to help launch some new Marvel projects? Well, now that I'm back, I thought you'd like to know that all of Japan seems to be mad about Marvel! They're doing their own version of Spider-Man, live-action, as a weekly TV series; publishing more stories of our shy little superheroes than I could count, and I wish you could see all the clever toys and games they've based on our Marvel mythos. One of these days we'll do an article showing some of our more picturesque Japanese items, as soon as we can figure out which mag to print it in.

Item! You'll soon be seeing a great new feature in the Sunday Comic pages of newspapers from coast to coast called "Marvelous Fun and Games" by Owen McCarron (the talented whiz who brought you the first few Simon & Schuster Marvel Fun Books.) The full-color feature presents your superhero favorites in a merry melange of puzzles and games. Who *says* we're not spreading culture all over the land?

And now, it's time to reply to the first of the many, many questions you've sent me in answer to an earlier Soapbox request. This query was one of the most frequently asked, so I'll tackle it first: "Will comicbooks get better and better, or will the field just stagnate with the same recycled ideas?" Naturally, I'm no more of a prophet than you, but here's the way I see it. We'll continue to use the same "recycled" ideas, if that's what you mean by new adventures of our world-famous superheroes being published month after month, year after year. We'll keep producing them as long as you want them, and judging by the way you've been gobblin' them up, your interest hasn't slackened. *But*, besides bringing our usual literary fare, we spend virtually all of our free time trying to dream up new characters, new formats, new concepts, to keep the world of comics vital and alive and ever growing. Just look at some of our recent innovations: the Marvel line of rock star mags, such as KISS, the BEATLES, the upcoming SHAUN CASSIDY, SGT. PEPPER, ROLLING STONES, and other titles. The new Marvel super specials, $1.50 magazines with artwork in full color on glossy paper, such as our CONAN SUPER SPECIAL, with many other titles to follow. Then too, there are the new Marvel movie and book adaptations, plus PIZZAZZ, the steadily growing CRAZY, and the countless new Marvel projects in the works from Simon & Schuster and Pocket Books. And, as soon as we can catch our breaths, we'll be coordinating our projects with our own magazines in a new different series of publications. 'Nuff said?

Next ish—the answer to another of your most oft-repeated questions: "Is Irving Forbush a real person?" Till then, if you can bear the suspense, why not take a duck to lunch?

Excelsior!

Stan

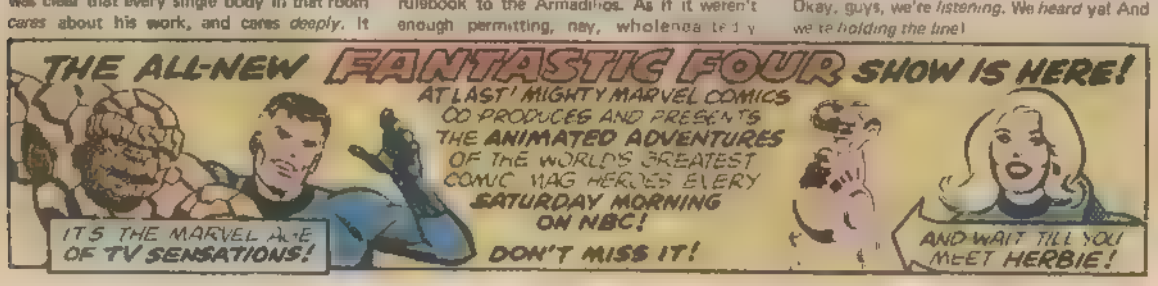
ITEM! They came from the wooded glens of Connecticut, and from the exotic shores of New Jersey, from the far off glades of Penn's Woods and from nearby Midtown. From Flushing by the 7 train they travelled, and from Inwood by the A. One plucky lady, 'tis said, braved the awesome dangers of the dreaded LIRR to traverse the staggering distance from her home in the fabled City of Gardens to the Hallowed Halls of Marvel. One by one they came, until at last, to a man they stood united, and the gathered throng thus convened this year's second Mighty Marvel Writers Meeting. Editor-in-Chief JIM *(Trouble)* SHOOTER presided, Consulting Editor *Marvelous* MARV WOLFMAN generously gave of his valuable time to lend an assist, and the Editorial Staff took notes as discussion ranged from the Art of Storytelling to the Science of Balloon Placement. Long into the afternoon they spoke, and when at length they adjourned, if no Great Issues were resolved, it was clear that every single body in that room *cares* about his work, and cares *deeply*. It seems to us that there's no ingredient more necessary to Quality than Caring — and we're pretty darn proud to be the kind of people and the kind of company that cares!

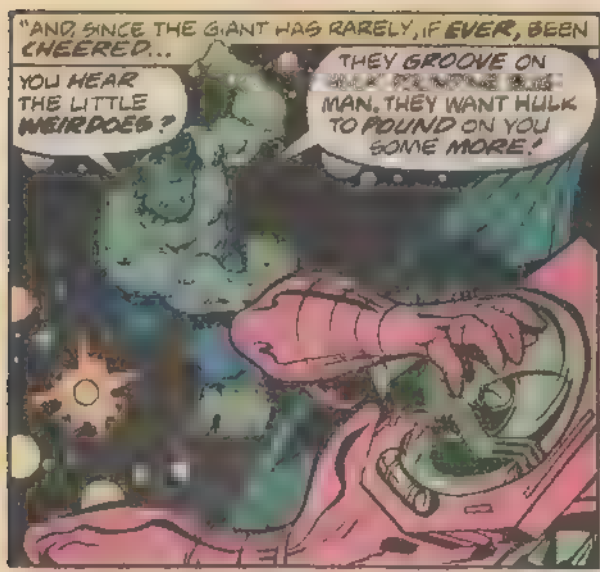
ITEM! Speaking of GODZILLA—just when we thought we'd seen it all, *Devil May-Care* DOUG MOENCH and *Happy* HERB TRIMPE came through with a *little* idea that flipped our embroidered babushkas! It's incredible! It's unbelievable! It's a beautifully ironic twist of fate that is guaranteed to leave Marvel continuity buffs everywhere astonished and delighted! It's *real*—and it's happening in the pages of GODZILLA #17, on sale *right now*! So get *out* there, Lizard-philes, and nab your copy before it gets away. Be *warned*, however—there's a Godzilla you've never *seen* before lurking inside!

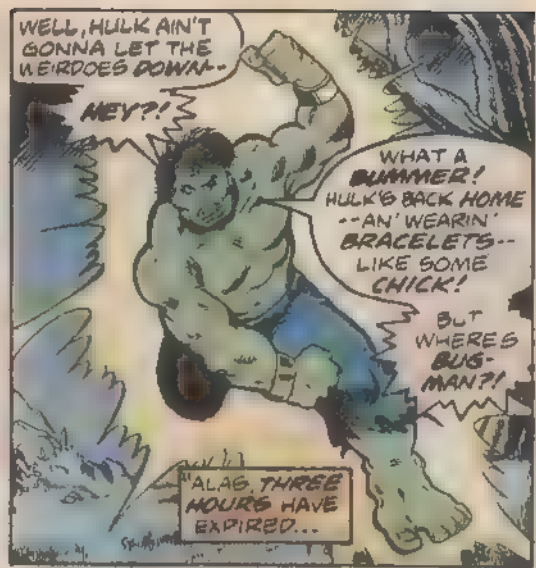
ITEM! The shredding sound you hear, should you happen to be in the Apple near 575 Mad Avenue, is probably Marvel Editor *Broadway* BOB HALL feeding another page of the rulebook to the Armadillos. As if it weren't enough permitting, nay, wholeheartedly *approving* the madness currently raging 'twixt the covers of GODZILLA, Bob has thrown caution, convention, and sanity to the winds with the Dynamic DEFENDERS as well. Once again, he has combined the not inconsiderable talents of DAVE *(The Dude)* KRAFT and *Energetic* ED HANNIGAN and more-or-less turned them loose on a three-part mini-epic ranging from the pits of Earthly Urban Blight to (are you ready for this?) the gleaming spires of Eternal ASGARD! Dave and Bob have been closely coordinating with Consulting Editor and resident Mythology Expert, *Rascally* ROY THOMAS concerning the Defenders' doings in the Golden Realm, to make certain everything meshes perfectly with Roy's current storyline in the pages of THOR. As for what's actually going *on*, Dave, Ed, Bob and able Assistant Editor MARY JO DUFFY asked us *not* to say! We *will* tell ya however, they have spent quite a bit of time lately chortling over their plans, so you can be sure what's coming up, beginning in DEFENDERS #66 (on sale now) is *not* what you'd expect. Get your copy and let us know what you think—should we *fire* the lot of 'em—or give 'em a *raise*?

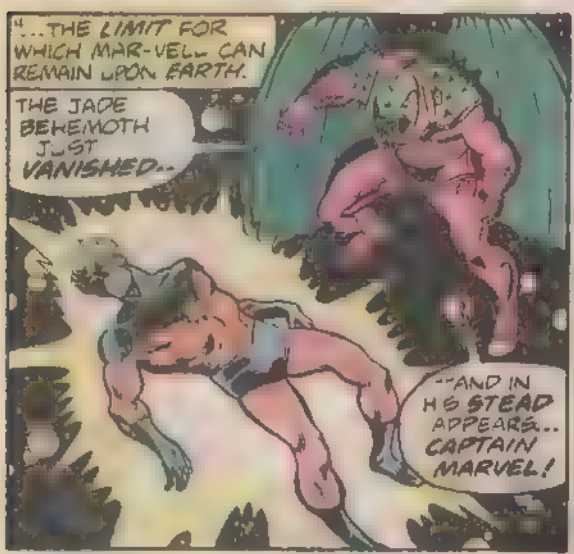
ITEM! And now for something *completely* different! You say your car won't start, your bowling average is down and your ring around the collar is loud enough to wake the neighbors? Well, you lose. Sadly, we must admit that our new MIGHTY WORLD OF MARVEL PIN UP BOOK will do absolutely nothing to right most of the cruel injustices of Fate. What it *will* do is dazzle you with its 21 *huge* 11"x15" full color illustrations of Marvel's Magnificent Heroes and Heroines in action! It's all here — all the glory, grandeur, power, and drama that marks the Marvel Age of Comics, caught in the carefully created and skillfully selected poster shots that tell it best. The accompanying narrative will excite and enlighten you. No collector should be without his own copy. You'll see it at better book stores everywhere—*if* you look *soon*!

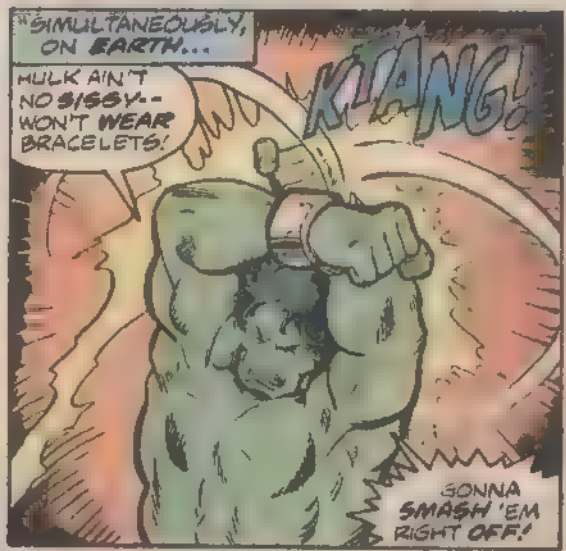
ITEM! For those of you who are independently wealthy, and, therefore, send your chauffeur down to the magazine store to pick up the latest batch of Marvel's monthly offerings, and then don't bother to count the change from the C-Note you gave him, we feel obligated to mention that Marvel Comics *are still* only 35¢ a throw. That, of course, is an academic point to the landed gentry, but to the rest of you—and *us*—it means a lot. We've been getting the message from your many cards and letters for umpteen months back, that today's up-up-and-away prices are squeezing you hard—and you just don't have the bucks to pay 50¢ or a Dollar for Comics—even for comics as good as ours! Okay, guys, we're *listening*. We *heard* ya! And we're *holding the line*!

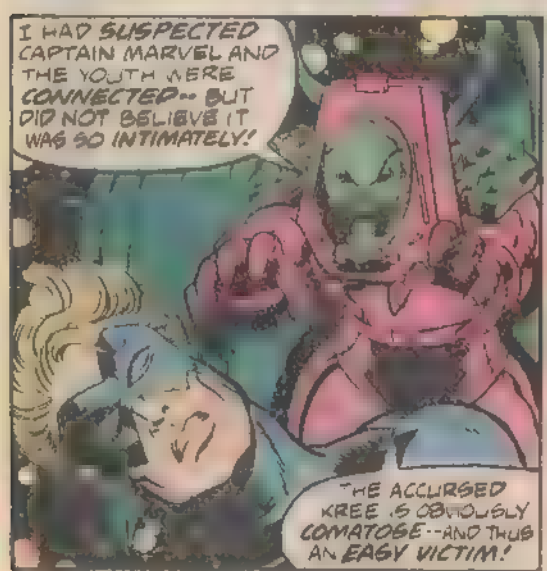



"AND, SINCE THE GIANT HAS RARELY, IF EVER, BEEN CHEERED...
YOU HEAR THE LITTLE WEIRDOES?
THEY GROOVE ON MAN. THEY WANT HULK TO POUND ON YOU SOME MORE!


WELL, HULK AIN'T GONNA LET THE WEIRDOES DOWN--
HEY?!
WHAT A BUMMER! HULK'S BACK HOME --AN' WEARIN' BRACELETS-- LIKE SOME CHICK!
BUT WHERE'S BUG-MAN?!
"ALAS, THREE HOURS HAVE EXPIRED...

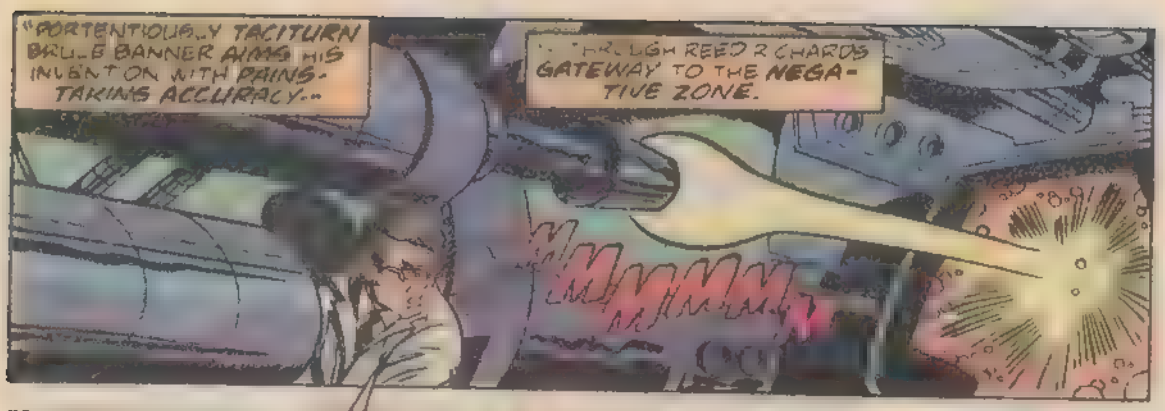

"...THE LIMIT FOR WHICH MAR-VEL CAN REMAIN UPON EARTH.
THE JADE BEHEMOTH JUST VANISHED--
--AND IN HIS STEAD APPEARS... CAPTAIN MARVEL!

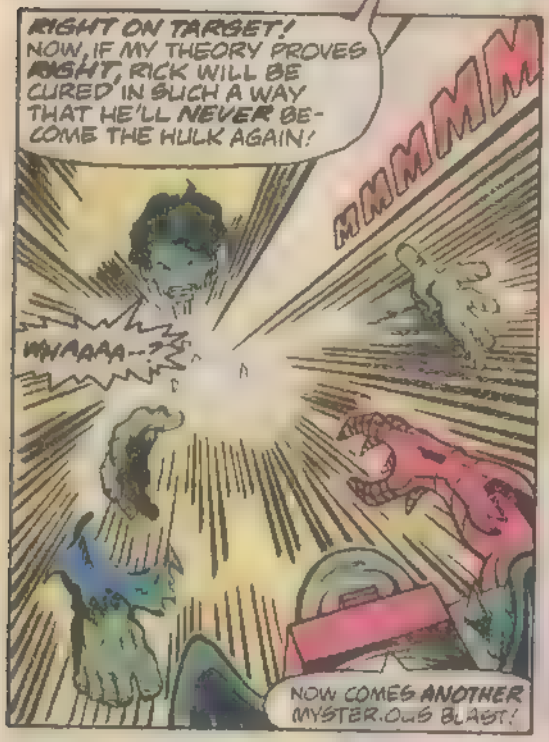

"SIMULTANEOUSLY, ON EARTH...
HULK AIN'T NO SISSY-- WON'T WEAR BRACELETS!
KLANG!
GONNA SMASH 'EM RIGHT OFF!


I HAD SUSPECTED CAPTAIN MARVEL AND THE YOUTH WERE CONNECTED-- BUT DID NOT BELIEVE IT WAS SO INTIMATELY!
THE ACCURSED KREE IS OBVIOUSLY COMATOSE--AND THUS AN EASY VICTIM!

ONLY EASY VICTIM IS GONNA BE BUG-MAN!
WHOOM!

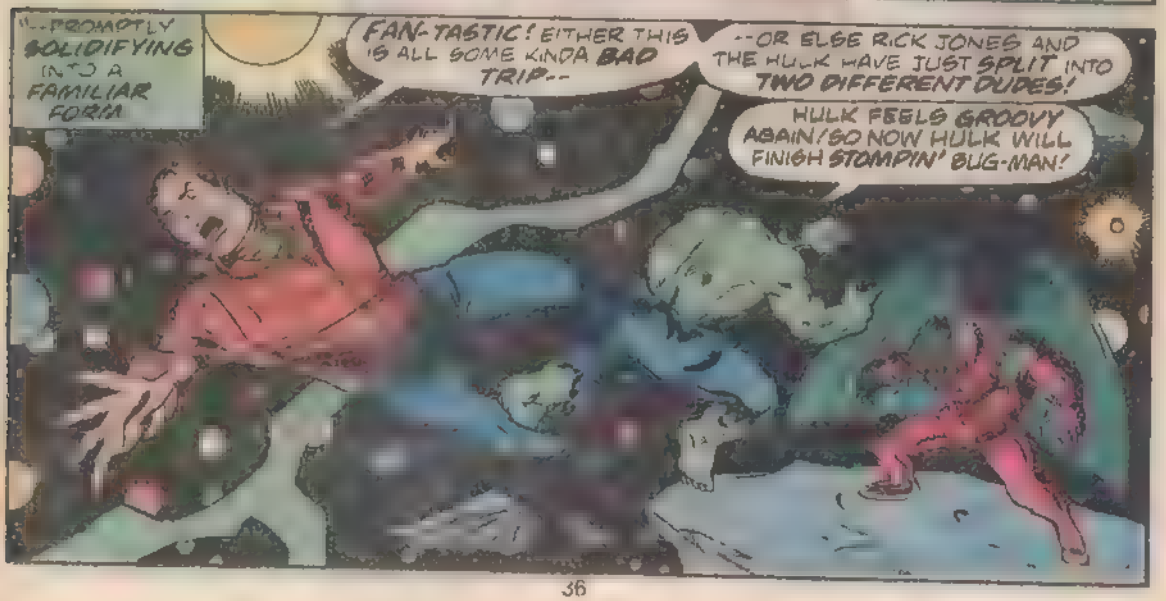
DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT HULK IS BACK! HULK NEVER CHICKENS OUT OF A RUMBLE!
INSOLENT GARGOYLE!
THIS IS ANNIHILUS AT WHOM YOU SO CRUDELY BELLOW-- THE MASTER OF THIS NIGHTDARK REALM!
AND IN THIS DIMENSION, I SHALL EVER REIGN SUPREME!
YOU AN WHAT ARMY? ON MY TURF, HULK IS BADDEST CAT AROUND! AND EVEN HERE--
--HULK'S GONNA TAKE BIG-MAN APART!
WE SHALL SEE, YOU GROTESQUE CLOWN-- WHEN, HEAD-ON, YOU MEET THE POWER OF ANNIHILUS!
KA-THOG!
SO GREAT IS THIS COLLISION OF TITANS--
"--THAT THE IMPACT REGISTERS ON REED RICHARD'S INSTRUMENTS.
BANNER! I GOT THE PROPER FIX ON THEM!
THEN...
THAT'S RIGHT, FRIEND. YOU CAN TRY OUT YOUR GAMMATRON.
IS IT SAFE, DR. BANNER? WHAT I MEAN IS...
IT WON'T HURT RICK, WILL IT?
I WISH I COULD ANSWER THAT LOU ANN. AND, TO BE BRUTALLY FRANK--
--I WISH YOU WOULDN'T WATCH ...UNTIL THIS WHOLE THING'S OVER.
K!

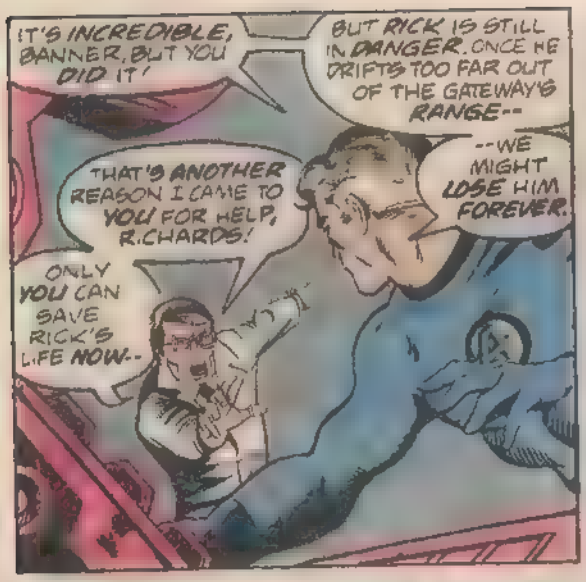

"PORTENTOUSLY TACITURN BRUCE BANNER AIMS HIS INVENTION WITH PAINSTAKING ACCURACY--
"THROUGH REED RICHARDS GATEWAY TO THE NEGATIVE ZONE.
MMMM

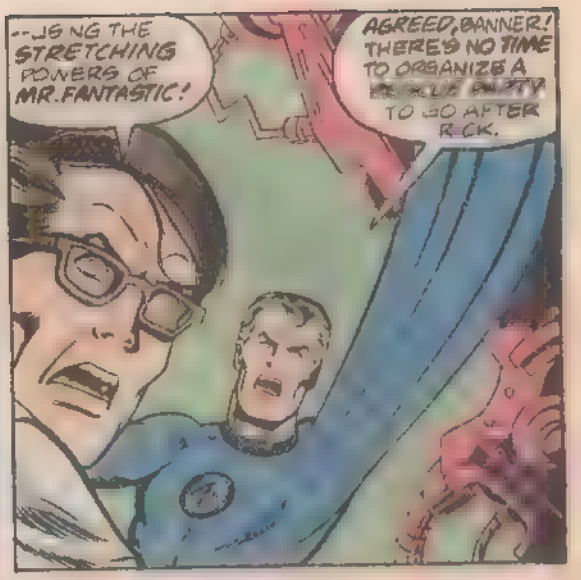

RIGHT ON TARGET! NOW, IF MY THEORY PROVES RIGHT, RICK WILL BE CURED IN SUCH A WAY THAT HE'LL NEVER BECOME THE HULK AGAIN!
MMMMM
WHAAAA--?
NOW COMES ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS BLAST!

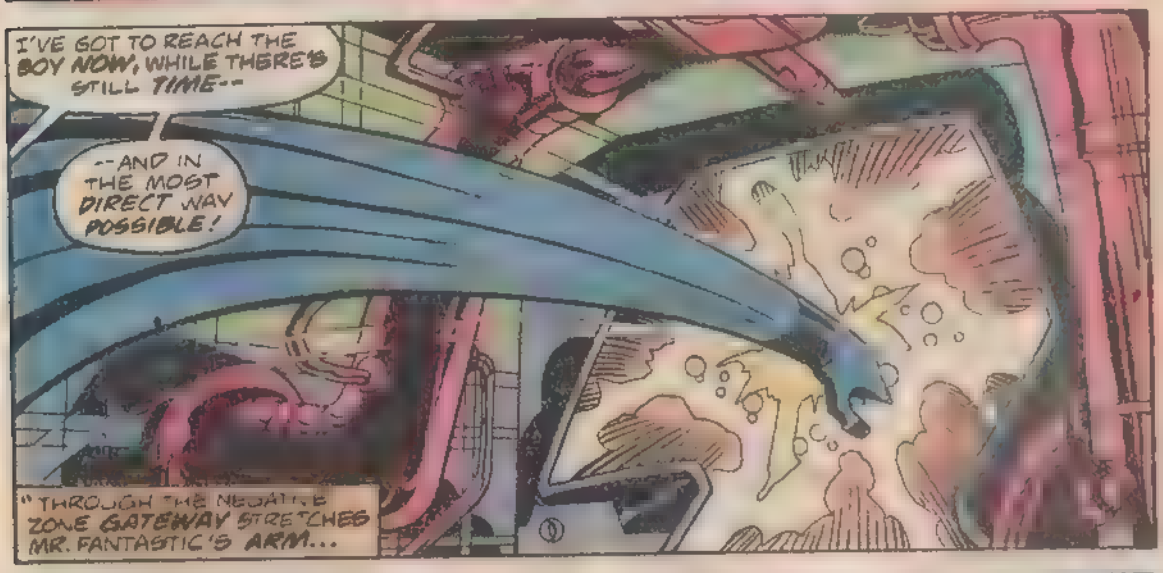
"THE RADIATION BOMBARDMENT FROM THE GAMMATRON WOULD SLAY AN ORDINARY HUMAN. BUT, THE HULK SIMPLY ABSORBS THE DOSAGE.
HULK FEELS KINDA WEIRD--LIKE HULK IS FREAKIN' OUT!

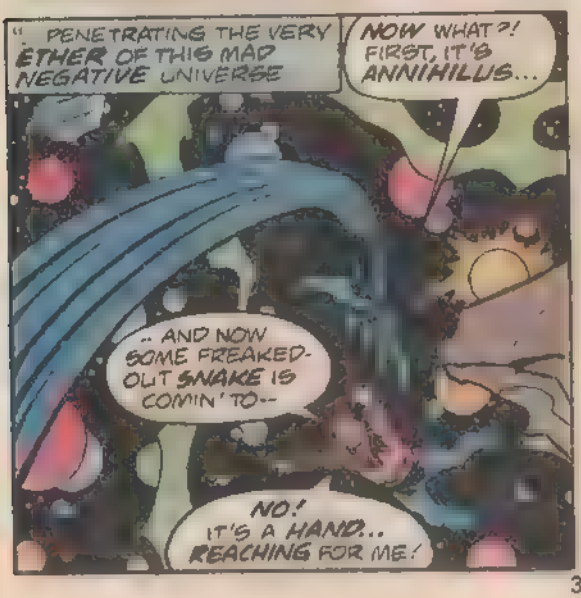
"THEN, AS HIS POWERFUL BODY PULSES FROM THE INCREDIBLE DOSAGE, THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE OCCURS:
"A HUMANOID SHAPE, OUTLINED BY GAMMA RAYS, SEPARATES FROM THE HULK--


"--PROMPTLY SOLIDIFYING INTO A FAMILIAR FORM
FAN-TASTIC! EITHER THIS IS ALL SOME KINDA BAD TRIP--
--OR ELSE RICK JONES AND THE HULK HAVE JUST SPLIT INTO TWO DIFFERENT DUDES!
HULK FEELS GROOVY AGAIN! SO NOW HULK WILL FINISH STOMPIN' BUG-MAN!

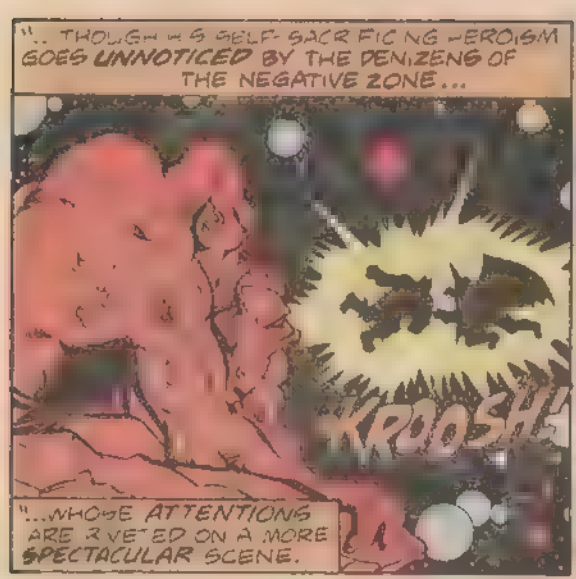

IT'S INCREDIBLE, BANNER, BUT YOU DID IT!
BUT RICK IS STILL IN DANGER. ONCE HE DRIFTS TOO FAR OUT OF THE GATEWAY'S RANGE--
--WE MIGHT LOSE HIM FOREVER.
THAT'S ANOTHER REASON I CAME TO YOU FOR HELP, RICHARDS!
ONLY YOU CAN SAVE RICK'S LIFE NOW--

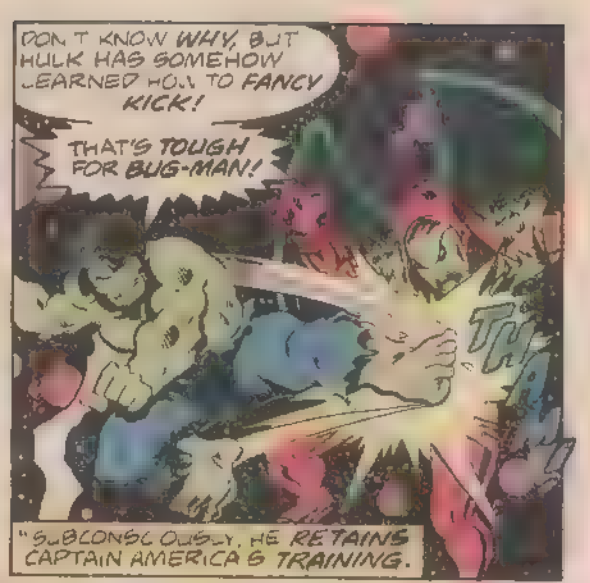

--USING THE STRETCHING POWERS OF MR. FANTASTIC!
AGREED, BANNER! THERE'S NO TIME TO ORGANIZE A RESCUE PARTY TO GO AFTER RICK.

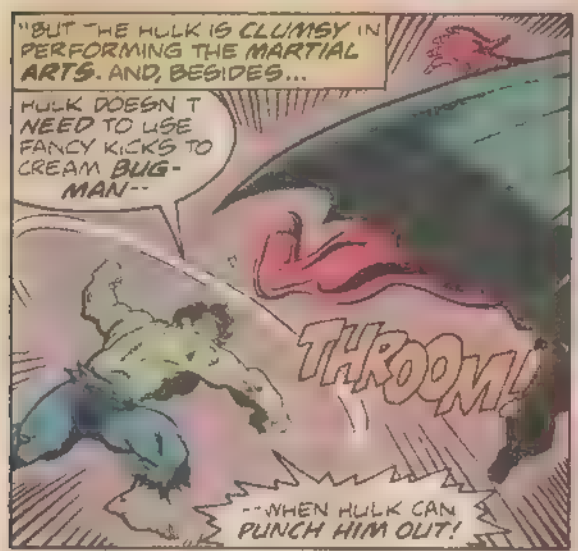

I'VE GOT TO REACH THE BOY NOW, WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME--
--AND IN THE MOST DIRECT WAY POSSIBLE!
"THROUGH THE NEGATIVE ZONE GATEWAY STRETCHES MR. FANTASTIC'S ARM...


"PENETRATING THE VERY ETHER OF THIS MAD NEGATIVE UNIVERSE
NOW WHAT?! FIRST, IT'S ANNIHILUS...
..AND NOW SOME FREAKED-OUT SNAKE IS COMIN' TO--
NO! IT'S A HAND... REACHING FOR ME!

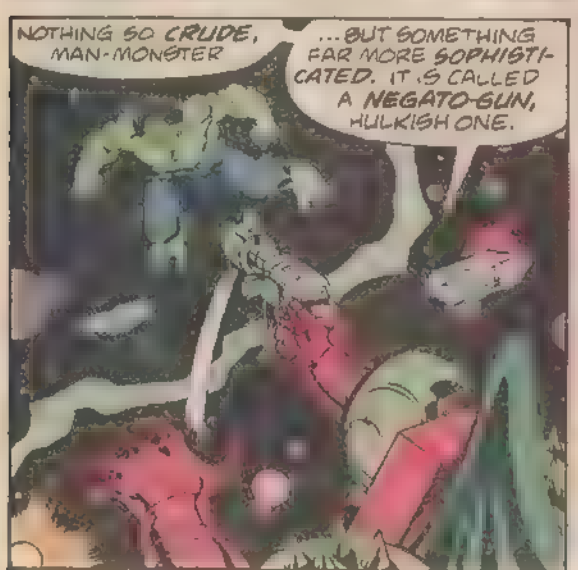
I'VE NEVER STRETCHED THIS FAR BEFORE! ARM FEELS... LIKE IT'S ABOUT TO SNAP! BUT... CAN'T GIVE UP... DESPITE THE PAIN...
GRAB IT, SON! TAKE MY HAND NOW! CAN'T HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER!
STRAINS OUT ANOTHER FEW INCHES...

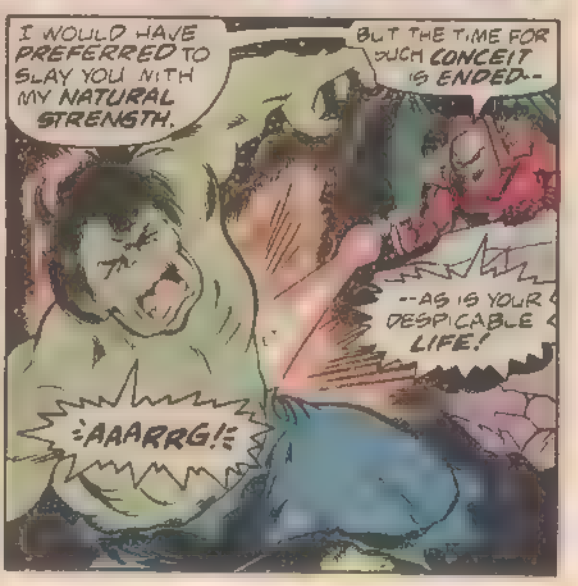

"... THOUGH HIS SELF-SACRIFICING HEROISM GOES UNNOTICED BY THE DENIZENS OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE...
KROOSH!
"...WHOSE ATTENTIONS ARE RIVETED ON A MORE SPECTACULAR SCENE.

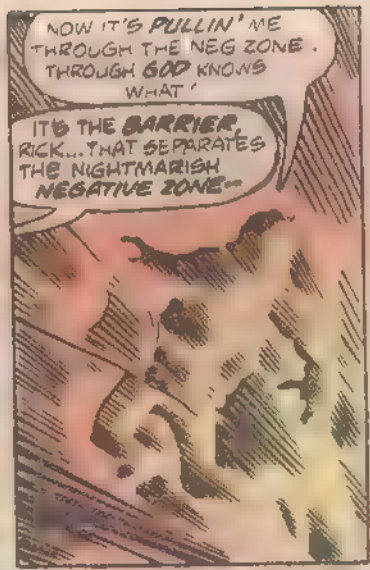

DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT HULK HAS SOMEHOW LEARNED HOW TO FANCY KICK!
THAT'S TOUGH FOR BUG-MAN!
"SUBCONSCIOUSLY, HE RETAINS CAPTAIN AMERICA'S TRAINING.

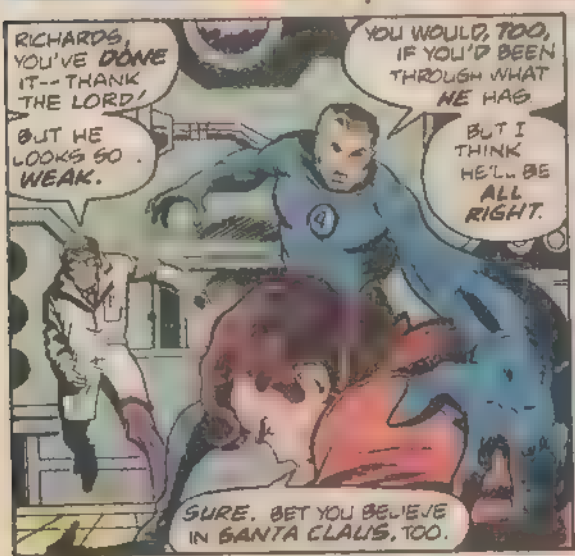

"BUT THE HULK IS CLUMSY IN PERFORMING THE MARTIAL ARTS. AND, BESIDES...
HULK DOESN'T NEED TO USE FANCY KICKS TO CREAM BUG-MAN--
THROOM!
--WHEN HULK CAN PUNCH HIM OUT!

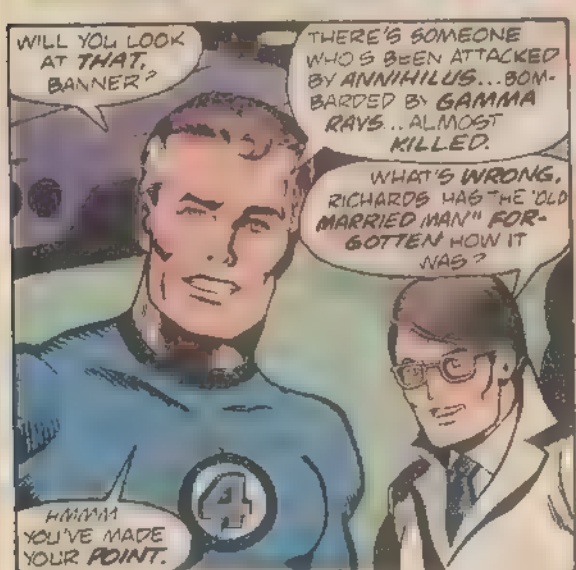
ALL RIGHT, MONSTER! I CONCEDE THAT YOU SURPASS ME IN SHEER, BRUTE, PHYSICAL STRENGTH.
BUT ANNIHILUS SHALL YET BE YOUR MASTER... SHALL STILL DESTROY YOU!
HA! YOU GONNA PULL SWITCH-BLADE ON HULK?

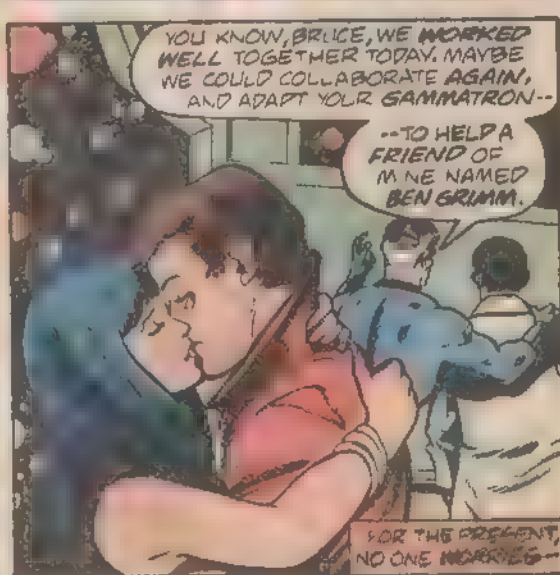

NOTHING SO CRUDE, MAN-MONSTER
...BUT SOMETHING FAR MORE SOPHISTICATED. IT'S CALLED A NEGATO-GUN, HULKISH ONE.


I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO SLAY YOU WITH MY NATURAL STRENGTH.
BUT THE TIME FOR SUCH CONCEIT IS ENDED--
--AS IS YOUR DESPICABLE LIFE!
:AAARRG!:









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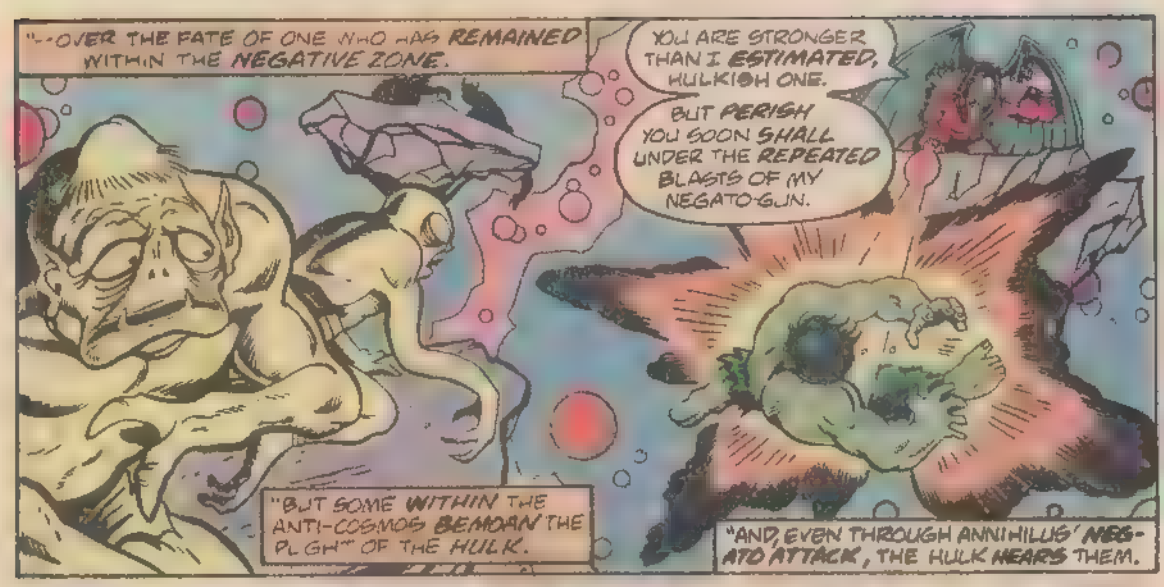
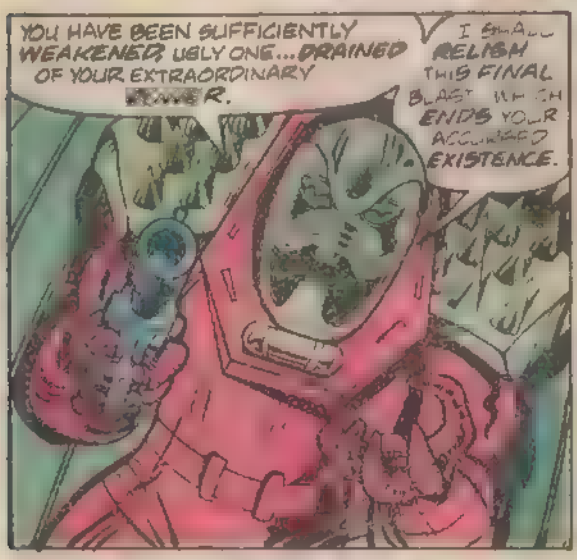
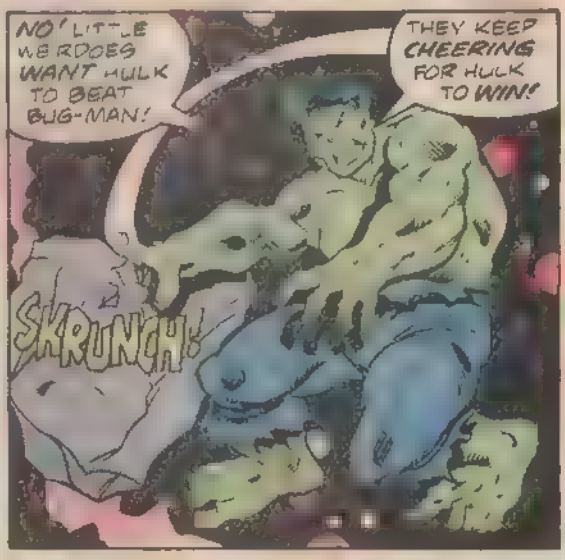

"--OVER THE FATE OF ONE WHO HAS REMAINED WITHIN THE NEGATIVE ZONE.
YOU ARE STRONGER THAN I ESTIMATED, HULKISH ONE.
BUT PERISH YOU SOON SHALL UNDER THE REPEATED BLASTS OF MY NEGATO-GUN.
"BUT SOME WITHIN THE ANTI-COSMOS BEMOAN THE PLIGHT OF THE HULK.
"AND, EVEN THROUGH ANNIHILUS' NEGATO ATTACK, THE HULK HEARS THEM.


YOU HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY WEAKENED, UGLY ONE... DRAINED OF YOUR EXTRAORDINARY POWER.
I SHALL RELISH THIS FINAL BLAST WHICH ENDS YOUR ACCURSED EXISTENCE.

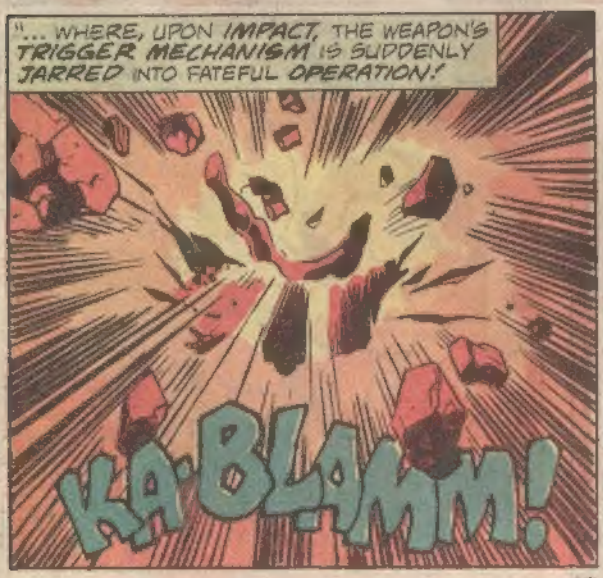

NO! LITTLE WERDOES WANT HULK TO BEAT BUG-MAN!
THEY KEEP CHEERING FOR HULK TO WIN!
SKRUNCH!

AND HULK WON'T COP OUT ON THEM!

RRAAAK!

SO, BUG-MAN CRASHES OUT ON HULK! AND IF HE WAKES UP, HE'LL SHOOT HIS SOUPED-UP ZIP-GUN AGAIN!
BETTER THAT BUG-MAN STAYS CRASHED OUT!

'CAUSE HULK IS SICK OF GETTIN' BUGGED BY FREAKY BUG-MAN!
"WE CANNOT CREDIT THE HULK FOR THE TRAJECTORY OF HIS WINGED TARGET.
"NEVERTHELESS, ANNIHILUS SLAMS AGAINST HIS DRIFTING NEGATO-GUN... THE MOMENTUM HURLINS HIM TOWARD FLOATING ROCKS...
THA-WOM!


"... WHERE, UPON IMPACT, THE WEAPON'S TRIGGER MECHANISM IS SUDDENLY JARRED INTO FATEFUL OPERATION!
KA-BLAMM!

BUG-MAN WAS WIPED OUT. BUT HULK COULDN'T CARE LESS. BUG-MAN WAS JUST A PUNK.
BUT WHAT HAPPENS TO HULK NOW? HOW DOES HULK GET BACK TO HIS OWN STOMPIN' GROUNDS?
HMMMM. HULK IS THINKIN'...
"WE LEAVE HIM WITH HIS THOUGHTS...

"...RETURNING, ONCE MORE, TO EARTH."
NOW AIN'T WE THE MOST GRINNIN' GROUP YOU EVER LAID EYES ON!
AND WHY SHOULDN'T WE BE, RICK?
I'M SURE OUR KREE FRIEND WOULD AGREE.

TOTALLY, DR. BANNER. THANKS TO THE CURATIVE BACKLASH OF YOUR GAMMATRON, AND WITH RICK'S TOTAL FREEDOM FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE--
--MAR-VELL IS ALIVE AND LIB-ERATED.

MY NEW FREEDOM ISN'T QUITE AS DRASTIC AS YOURS, MAR-VELL. NOW I CAN PURSUE OTHER SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS--
--THAN FINDING A CURE FOR THE HULK.
AND HOW ABOUT ME?

HERE'S THIS LONELY ORPHAN, WHO GETS HIMSELF A COUPLE FAR-OUT IDENTITY HANG-UPS. BUT I FINALLY KICKED THE HANG-UPS--
--AND I'M NOT A LONER ANYMORE.

WE'VE ALL COME A LONG WAY, WITH A LONGER JOURNEY AHEAD.
I CAN DIG IT, MARV. YOU KEEP COOL, HEAR?
AN' - IF YOU EVER NEED SOME ATOMS TO TRADE--

--GIVE RICK JONES A BUZZ!
SHREEEEE!!

FAN-TASTIC!
I GUESS THAT TAKES CARE OF MOST OF US, DOESN'T IT?
IF YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT THE HULK STILL STUCK IN THAT NEG ZONE, DON'T SWEAT IT.
I GOT THIS FEELIN' HE'S DOIN' ALL RIGHT.

NEXT WHAT IF CONAN WALKED THE EARTH TODAY? THIS TIME FOR SURE!

WHY NOT?

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

ROY THOMAS
EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Marvel,

Re: WHAT IF #10, wherein Jane Foster gained the power of Thor.

This is what an alternate-reality story should be like! Reproducing the original story panel by panel, varying only the altered concepts (in this case, Jane's having to go through the same motions Don Blake did all those years ago in the Marvel Universe we're familiar with). Someone (all right, Don and Rick, it was you) really did their homework on this one! Pages 6 and 7, especially, reproducing so faithfully the mood of pages 4 and 5 of the original tale, were my special favorites, but I think you missed a bet by not using the same panel layout as the original, including chapter headings ("The Power of Thordis'" and "Thordis the Mighty Strikes Back" have a nice ring to them)! Speaking of reproduced panels, that last one on page 12 was great, with those two NATO officers' alternate-world doubles standing in for their Marvel Universe originals. It's little touches like that that make Marvel Marvel! I do have one question about the origin section of the story: What happened to the old fisherman who first spotted the invaders in the original story? It would have been nice if you could have fitted him in somewhere along the way, too.

Pages 30 and 31 were my second favorites in the tale, as I like scenes of the alternate-reality hero fighting the same foes as the original Marvel creation. And the last panel on p. 31 was priceless, with Giant-Man giving the Wasp a taste of her own medicine by ogling Thordis! As for the wrap-up, you're right about the shock ending! But, like the Spidey tale before it, you tried to bring it into line with the established Marvel Universe. Still, I can't help wondering what happened on that world after Thor began his crimefighting career. Did the people of earth wonder about the man who'd replaced Thordis? Did the Avengers accept him as her replacement without question? A follow-up story might be in order. Well, that's about it for now. Here's my parting question:

What if I were to buy the next ish and write you another letter?

Robert Kowalski
12600 McDougall
Detroit, MI 48212

We may just find out, eh, Bob? 'Cause we've got a hunch that few people could resist finding out how Jack "King" Kirby would write as well as draw an F.F. saga— even one in which he and Smilin' Stan Lee are the principals!

Meanwhile, though we're sorry as anything that various circumstances forced postponement of our WHAT IF/CONAN tale for what we're determined will be the final time, and we fully intend to have it in our lucky 13th issue (?), we've been waiting for a long time for this tale of "I Was a Teenage Hulk" to come in, and right now seemed like the ideal time to lay it on you, with Marvel's TV sensation currently tearing up (literally) the small screen.

As for your cogent comments on the Thordis story, you stand at one extreme (and not nearly alone, either)— those who seem to like the parallel-development type of story in WHAT IF, in which virtually every event of an earlier tale has its parallel event in the new one. So do we— but we also like (and so do those who *dislike* the above kind of epic) other kinds of WHAT IF tales, so let's hear from *that* segment for a moment, shall we. . .?

Dear Friends,

WHAT IF #10 was probably the dumbest issue in your entire history! Maybe not the storyline, but rather the idea itself. And to top it off with that ending was even worse. Not only did you screw up a mystic and mythological continuity (I believe such "dimensions" are apart from the science-fiction format; that is, by their supernatural rights, they shouldn't bend to the natural universe. For instance, many times Thor's hammer is thwarted by scientific means, though his hammer is magic, not a normal, natural object)— but you are also ruining my faith in you.

I thought, if well done, the WHAT IF mag could be very good. I'm sorry to say, though, it isn't. Just think of those Norwegians who spent hundreds of years creating Celtic mythology, and then you screwed it all up by saying Thor was a woman!

Curtis Burns
821 Derby Ln.
Green Bay, WI

Actually, Curtis, if you study any kind of mythology, including Norwegian/Norse (and don't confuse the latter with Celtic, please— they're not at all the same thing), you'll see that there are literally dozens, probably hundreds, of inconsistencies in the tales themselves. Thus, while Marvel has from the very beginning played fast and loose with certain areas of Norse myth, so did the various skalds and poets themselves, over the years— if only because there was nothing written down for them to follow. Besides, we gave you the "real" Thor in the end, didn't we?

People:

WHAT IF #10 was a very good issue, and was much enjoyed in this quarter. But there was one mistake: On page 12, panel 4, Thordis says, "They're going back to Saturn." But how did she know they were from Saturn? They never mentioned it. I've been reading THOR for some time now, but I was unaware that the hammer gave him ESP. I am expecting a no-prize. But, aside from that one small error, WHAT IF #10 was a good issue.

Peter Brown
26923 Normandy
Bayville, Ohio 44140

The no-prize is yours, lad. And Dinosaur Don Glut has been assigned polishing chores on the rings of Saturn. (Incidentally, it might interest you to know that there's a sizable faction of Bullpenners who don't believe those stone men really *lived* on Saturn at all, but merely used it as a jumping-off place for an attack on earth. They have all sorts of valid-sounding SF-type reasons. Us? We're just glad they've gone back where they came from— *wherever* it was!)

Dear Sirs,

WHAT IF #10 was a masterpiece! I have never written about a comic before, but I had to write about that issue!

Being a romantic at heart, I thoroughly enjoyed it. Having Jane Foster find the hammer was ingenious. Though I have not been able to find more than about four WHAT IF issues, the ones I have gotten have usually had an unhappy ending. It's delightful to see that not always does a WHAT IF have to come to a sad end.

Once again, thanks so much for a fantastic issue. I have read it several times already and when I'm done writing this letter, I will probably read it once again. I love Marvel Comics, and issues of the quality of WHAT IF #10 make me love Marvel even more. More power to you!

Mrs. Debra Ann Barnett
8108 Pointer Ln. #5
Manassas, VA 22110

And more to *you*, Debra! For once, even Ye Editor is left. . . speechless.